"She's a nice girl, but she's not very bright" A study of working class women and university education.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a study of a group of six working class women who have been to, and graduated from, university. Situated within the radical sociology of education, this work is concerned with implementing a socialist feminist sociological framework to analyse the experiences of a group of six working class women at university. As such, it draws on theories of schooling and inequality to demonstrate how people's experiences of university are structured according to their gender specific class and ethnic culture.

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INTRODUCTION

Reflecting on my own experience of university as a working class woman, I am taken back to frustrating high school days. Although I desperately wanted what the school had to offer, ie. qualifications, I was generally unsuccessful, scraping through School Certificate and having to repeat my sixth form (U.E) year. However I was persistent and determined to go to university. It almost became an obsession; to demonstrate to my high school teachers that I could get a degree. Initially I wasn't very confident about passing, but I was willing to give it a go. I always put the possibility of failure at the back of my mind (although it always haunted me); my motto being, that I would deal with that later. I knew that if I let this uncertainty crowd my thoughts I would not be able to continue. Now that I am all but finished at university I feel that I have really come to understand my unique educational experience, and in doing so I have had been fortunate enough to share the fascinating experiences of others. Like my own history, this thesis is an examination of the experiences of a group of six working class women of university.

The aim of this study is to assess the nature of the women's educational decision making, taking into account any experiences specifically related to their gender, class and/or ethnicity. Located within the radical sociology of education, this study is concerned with contributing to a fuller understanding of the role of education in the social and cultural reproduction of New Zealand society.

The purpose of chapter one is to situate this study within the contemporary field of the radical sociology of education. As such, I will outline the relevant theories which examine the processes through which schooling contributes to the maintenance of the existing social order.

Continuing on from the previous chapter, chapter two addresses the issue of educational inequality from a feminist perspective. In doing so I discuss the cultural studies which have examined the experiences of girls and women, and raise important sociological issues, previously ignored by 'mainstream' sociologists.

Chapter three offers some personal reasons for this study and explains the methodology I employed. It also raises some important issues about the role of the researcher in the research process.

In chapter four I address the theoretical relationship between class, gender and higher education. It becomes clear that, although the numbers of women at university have increased dramatically, it is not equally available to all women. In addition, I shall explain how the nature of women's participation at university is structured according to the sexual division of labour.

Chapters five, six and seven are the analysis chapters. They deal with an analysis of the material gathered from interviews with the six working class women. The interview material generated four major themes, of which all were structured by issues of class, gender and ethnicity.

Using the interview material, in chapter five I explore the educational experiences of the working class women and examine the role of the family on educational experience. In this chapter I will argue that the family situation cannot be divorced from the class, gender and ethnic experiences that students have in schools.

In chapter six I examine the role of schools in the construction of gender relations. Using the interview material, this chapter makes the point that girls' responses in

schools are made according to the gender relations experienced within class and ethnically located families.

Again, using the interview material, chapter seven explores the social and academic experiences of the working class women at university. I also examine the nature of university education and the implication of class isolation at university.

Funding tertiary education is an important issue with respect to participation at university, therefore in chapter eight I briefly analyse the impact of finances on people's post-secondary educational decision making. I also explore the theme of state funding for tertiary education, and the consequences of user-pays on the participation of minority groups at university.

The final chapter is a discussion of the major issues arising from my interviews. As such I will include a discussion of the intersection of gender, ethnicity and class on experiences at university. I will also discuss some social consequences of having a university degree for working class women and reflect on the type of knowledge one gets through obtaining a university degree. In this chapter I argue that valued knowledge is a subjective category, dependant upon the codes of the dominant group in society for its evaluation and merit. Therefore, obtaining the valuable knowledge is not so much a matter of intellectual ability, but more a reflection of a persons ability to internalise and reflect the values of the dominant group in society.

CHAPTER 1
'MAINSTREAM' SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION

The function of schooling in society is to educate each new generation to participate effectively in the future of that society. This task includes both training individuals for the labour market and teaching them everyday life skills. Therefore it can be said that schools play an important role in peoples' 'choice' of occupation and in their social development.

An individual's 'success' at school is equated in terms of the quality of her/his educational qualification(s). The more qualifications obtained and the higher they are, the more successful that person is deemed to be. On the surface this scenario appears fair; the more motivated a person is and the more ability that person demonstrates, the more reward there will be forthcoming. My argument is that in spite of this commonly held belief that schools reward those who perform best, schools merely reflect and reproduce the existing unequal social structure. So that serious inequalities exist along class, gender and ethnic lines.

Research in New Zealand which goes beyond blaming individual lack of ability for limited school outcomes suggests factors such as class, gender and ethnicity are amongst the major determinants of "success" at school. A number of studies have shown this to be the case. Nash et al (1990) argue that the higher a person's socio-economic status (SES) the more likely she/he is to be successful in the education system. Lauder et al (1984) conclude that even when ability is taken into account, working class students do more poorly than their middle class counterparts.[1] Both Lauder and Hughes (1990:b) and Nash et al (1990) found that students from the highest socio-economic groups on average achieve higher results in secondary school examinations, and gain more university qualifications, than their lower

socio-economic group counterparts. Furthermore, research has shown that students from SES group one leave school, on average, to enter jobs over two points higher up the SES scale than the equivalent SES group six (Lauder & Hughes, 1990:b). In addition, working class students of all abilities are more likely to fail or quit school before attempting the University Bursary examinations than their Upper Class counterparts (Lauder et al, 1984). In the 1984 study, Lauder et al also concluded that success at school does not necessarily translate into the same options for working class students as it tends to for middle and upper class students. That is, working class students who are eligible to go to university are less likely, than their middle class counterparts, to take up this option (Lauder et al, 1984 & 1992).

Although the official terminology of qualifications may have changed since Lauder et al (1984) conducted their research, the trends that they demonstrated continue to occur. Two points can be made about this. Working class children continue to underachieve on the one hand, and, on the other, "a university degree practically assures entrance to the Upper Class" (Lauder et al, 1984:3).

Research into inequalities of school outcomes suggests that there are strong links between social class and the numbers of students going on to tertiary education and those having access to professional jobs. In addition it is now accepted that the different paths girls and boys follow through schools translates into different career and future options. What is more, in New Zealand these inequalities are compounded by the marked differences in the school outcomes of Maori (and other ethnic minority groups) and Pakeha children.

It has been argued that pupils base important decisions regarding their futures around traditionally learned gender, class, and ethnic roles. A problem arises because not all students are given the same opportunity to make informed vocational and life choices. Therefore, some students miss out on the best rewards

merely because of the colour of their skin or because they are born a certain sex. I will argue that this (unequal) process of social selection relies on people accepting the myth that the current education system is fair.

For girls, the problem faced is a lack of academic achievement at the higher levels of schooling and to some extent the limited number of traditionally 'gender-typed' subjects. These lead to a limited range of career and future options. Therefore, although women's participation in the paid labour market has increased from 35.9 percent in 1966 to 62.7 percent in 1986, the scope of women's employment remains very restricted (Haines, 1989). For example, 51 percent of all women can be found in six main types of paid labour: sales, clerical, teaching, secretarial, nursing and bookkeeping (WACE, 1988). For Maori women and girls the picture is considerably more grim; the differences in school achievement being particularly marked at the higher and lower qualification levels.

In spite of the record numbers of women attending New Zealand universities, closer examination reveals large class and race differences in women's attendance, and in the nature of study undertaken by women. Although figures are limited, in 1980 Lauder calculated that 36 percent of students at the University of Canterbury came from SES group one, while only 1 percent of the students at the same university were from SES group 6. In 1989, 67.1 percent of all women students at the University of Canterbury graduated from the Arts faculty, with typically few women graduates recorded in the traditionally 'masculine' disciplines (Engineering 5%; Commerce 33%). Although women make up half of all university students, only one third of graduate students are women. In addition, there are few women in the more advanced positions within the university hierarchy, both as students and as staff (Smith, 1991). Maori women make up a very small percentage of the total number of internal students in New Zealand universities (2.15%) and an even

smaller number of those undertaking extramural study (2.01%) (O'Neill, 1990). How do we explain these massive differences?

This chapter will outline the theoretical arguments of educationalists from New Zealand and overseas, and explain why differences in school outcomes should be regarded as systematic inequalities.

Explaining differences in school outcomes

If research and statistics clearly reflect major differences in the outcomes of schooling for students of differing gender, social class background and ethnicity, the following questions must be answered: why do they continue to exist and how can they be explained?

Explanations for the differences in school outcomes can be separated into two general areas: those who maintain that it is a problem with the individual; and those who argue that the social system is inherently unequal and therefore school success is a reserved right of the privileged group in our society. The first argument falls within what is referred to as the Technocratic-Meritocratic viewpoint. This is where inequality of income, power and status is seen to be a reflection of the unequal distribution of individual personal ability.

This viewpoint originates from the thoughts of John Dewey, who regarded schools as egalitarian institutions, concerned with the integration of young people into occupational roles required by the economy, the promotion of moral development and the promotion of achievement and success through competition. What Dewey

failed to understand was (and is) that because capitalist societies are inherently unequal there will always be an element of inequality.

Those favouring a Technocratic-Meritocratic viewpoint maintain that students' choice of school subjects and subsequent future occupations are natural and rational decisions, made on the basis of individual intelligence levels. These assumptions have been discounted by Lauder et al (1984, 1990:a). They have demonstrated that even when ability is taken into account those from the upper class continue to have more than twice the advantage of working class students. In fact, only about half of the difference in school success between the various SES groups could be attributed to differences in measured ability (Lauder & Hughes, 1990:a). Nash et al (1990) have reached similar conclusions, arguing that working class students are not failing at school, rather schools are failing working class students. These trends have led Lauder and Hughes (1990:b:5) to conclude that:

> New Zealand is not the open socially mobile society the common myth of everyone getting a 'fair go' suggests.

Clearly there is more to this problem than merely the matching of ability to future occupational outcome. To suggest that differences in school outcomes are a matter of individual ability merely legitimates the unequal social structure. In the following section I shall outline the various theories which seek to disclose how both capitalist and patriarchal social structures, and the individuals who make up society, operate in conjunction with the education system to produce unequal life chances based on class, gender, and ethnicity.

Reproductive theory and contemporary radical sociology of education

> Contrary to the claims of liberal educationalists that school offers the prospect of greater social equality through possibilities for social mobility and opportunities for all, radical theorists have argued that the main function of school is to legitimize existing inequalities (Jones, 1986:5).

Reproductive theories have helped to call into question the role of schools and the very process of schooling. The central idea behind reproductive theory is that the experiences of students in schools help them internalise a subjectivity and class position that contributes to the reproduction of the unequal status quo. Whilst both critical and radical reproductive theories of education have sought to expose the political nature of the schooling process which liberal theory has ignored, they place differing emphasis on structure and ideology.

Radical theories examine how schools contribute to the reproduction of an unequal social structure and how the school's 'hidden agenda' is maintained without the use of overtly oppressive measures. In contrast, critical theories of reproduction explore the issue from the perspective that it is both the school and the students themselves who contribute to the reproduction and production of gender and class inequalities.

There are different approaches within the radical sociology of education to the question of the actual relation between the internal operation of the school and the overall social structure. Radical sociology of education was first dominated by structural theorists such as Althusser and Bowles and Gintis, and later challenged by cultural theorists like Bourdieu and Bernstein.

Unlike liberal educationalists who see schools as meritocratic institutions, reproduction theorists examine the relationship between schools and the needs of the capitalist state. They argue that in addition to teaching broad life skills, schools train students to recognise and understand (and not question) one type of knowledge; that belonging to the dominant social group.

Emerging from the reproductive theme are two distinctive schools of thought: the theories of **social reproduction** and of **cultural reproduction**. Whilst dramatically different in their focus, both theories share common roots in 'radical' theories of education.

Social reproduction

Social reproduction theorists argue that schools are important to the existence of capitalism because they impart in students the type of knowledge (work skills and attitudes) required for the reproduction of the capitalist mode of production.

At the forefront of social reproduction theories are the works of Althusser (1971), and Bowles and Gintis (1976). Whilst they stress different aspects of the reproductive process, they agree that the economy and schools represent the major set of relations for the reproduction of a capitalist economy.

Althusser's work is of significance because he initiated the debate about the role of schools in the reproduction of the capitalist state. Althusser was primarily concerned with understanding the reproduction of class relationships and how people accept their class identities. Whilst he acknowledged the ultimate

importance of the economic sphere, Althusser argued that ideological state apparatuses (ISA's) remain relatively autonomous.

According to Althusser, ideology is transmitted through ISA's. Although often diverse and relatively autonomous, ISA's reflect a ruling ideology. According to Althusser the most important ISA is the school. By internalising what the school teaches and from learning to develop social relationships, students absorb what is and what is not acceptable. Therefore, how a student views social reality distinguishes that individual from any other.

Bowles and Gintis' (1976) theory relies on an analysis of the structural effects of the workplace on individuals and groups. They maintain that a capitalist workforce is characterised by a hierarchically structured pattern of values, norms, and skills. And that everyday in school children learn, through the curriculum and from social interaction with other children, how they are expected to behave in the world as adults according to well-defined class, ethnic and gender 'rules'. They write:

> The educational system helps integrate youth into the economic system, we believe, through a structural correspondence between it's social relations and those of production. The structure of social relations in education not only inures the student to the discipline of the workplace, but develops the types of personal demeanour, modes of self-presentation, self-image, and social class identifications which are the crucial ingredients of job adequacy (Bowles & Gintis, 1976:131).

Bowles and Gintis (1976) theorised the schools' role as the reproduction of labour power and the necessary attitudes for capitalism. According to them this occurs through selection and training along class and gender lines. More specifically, the school is said to contribute to the reproduction of class relations by imparting in students the necessary dispositions, aspirations, attitudes and skills required by their future positions in an economy based on hierarchical relations.

Like Althusser, Bowles and Gintis refute liberal claims that school outcome is a matter of ability. Instead they argue that from the beginning of their school lives, working class students are socialised for low level jobs requiring minimal skills, whereas middle class students are taught the high level cognitive skills required for professional positions.

According to Bowles and Gintis, the social relations of production are mirrored and reproduced at other structural sites, such as in the social relations of schooling. Therefore, the form of control they emphasise is not ideological, rather it involves a series of lessons children learn from the school's authority structure. That is, the different forms of education and the internal organization of schools is said to prepare children from different levels of the occupational structure to fit into their respective class positions.

Bowles and Gintis explain that under capitalism the labour force is segmented into primary and secondary labour markets and that these labour markets are further separated by degrees of satisfaction; in terms of monetary rewards, degree of opportunity, promotional prospects, job security and so on. Accordingly, the best rewards lie within the primary market.

As one might expect, the secondary market is characterised as the domain of the oppressed minority groups, including women. However this argument has been criticised by feminist theorists for failing to acknowledge patriarchy as a crucial ingredient of capitalism (MacDonald, 1980). Furthermore, Bowles and Gintis neglect to account for the existence of a sexual division of labour within each segment of the labour force; in jobs that are stereotypically 'feminine'. Because Bowles and Gintis do not deal with these theoretical considerations, feminist

theorists have criticised them for failing to deliver an accurate description of the role of schooling and the reproduction of productive forces (MacDonald, 1980).

Although they recognise that the capitalist system utilises sexism, they continue to see it as something which develops externally. That is, they assume that within the different forms of schooling, catering for different sectors of the wage labour force, both sexes experience similar conditioning. This point has been strongly criticised by feminist sociologists, who themselves have divergent views. Socialist feminists would generally argue that we must consider equally class, gender and ethnic issues in any analysis.

Bowles and Gintis analyzed the sexual division of labour and the role of the family by pointing to the sex typing of gendered roles. However, this type of analysis fails to acknowledge the connection between patriarchal authority structures and the hierarchy of male over female within the social relations of the school and workplace. For example, Bowles and Gintis do not explain why so many men, compared to women, are situated in the most prestigious and powerful positions of decision making within the school's hierarchy. As a consequence their theory is ultimately incapable of accounting for the ways in which schools may reproduce at the ideological and structural levels.

A further major criticism is that Althusser and Bowles and Gintis over-emphasise and over-simplify the domination of individuals by schools. As a consequence, the individual is given no credit, and is in fact painted as a passive recipient of an oppressive social system. Giroux (1983) offers the following critique:

> The notion that human action and structure presuppose one another is ignored by Bowles and Gintis in favour of a model of correspondence in which the subject gets dissolved under the weight of structural constraints that appear to form both the personality and the workplace (Giroux, 1983:84-85).

The irony of correspondence theory, and where it remains fatally flawed, is that when Bowles and Gintis treat individuals as 'powerless pawns', they end up reproducing the very inequalities they seek to highlight because they neglect to leave room for the possibility of resistance and/or change. By only addressing the relationship between schools and the workforce, social reproduction theorists ignore important issues regarding the role of consciousness, ideology and resistance in the schooling process. Jones (1986) makes a comparable point when she writes:

> By downplaying the importance of human agency and concentrating on structural forces, reproduction theorists have unwittingly provided a rationale for not examining teachers and students in concrete school settings (Jones, 1986:16).

Feminist analysis of social reproduction

Feminist theories of schooling remain separate from the mainstream, stemming from a need to describe and explain the unique situation and experiences of girls and women in the education system. In spite of their theoretical diversity, MacDonald (1980) points to a common theme underlying feminist theories. She writes:

> The challenge inherent in this analyses is to re-assess current explanations of schooling, which have glossed over or ignored the existence of the sexual division of labour within the school and its impact in determining the relations between the family, schooling and the labour process (MacDonald, 1980:46).

Feminist theories of schooling maintain that there is a fundamental connection between sexist practices in schools and women's oppression in society as a whole.

As such, it is believed that women's oppression in the paid and unpaid workforce is reproduced through what happens in schools.

There is no one feminist theory of schooling. However feminist reproduction theorists share a common goal. They aim to establish a sociology of women's education which examines the sexual division of labour within schools and the relationship between the family, school and labour process. Feminist reproduction theories also share a belief in the power of historic material analysis, and seek to explain the relationship between class, gender and ethnicity.

MacDonald (1980) has helped us to understand how schooling, social class background and the family produces both classed and sexed subjects. She argues that in order to comprehend social inequality we must recognise that people are socialised to take up their positions in a social division of labour which is structured upon class and gender. As such, the pattern of women's employment must be seen as different from men's. She writes:

> Any theory of education which seeks to account for the form of schooling in terms of the mode of reproduction of the workforce... must recognize the structure of male-female dominance relations as integral and not subsidiary organizing principles of the work process (MacDonald, 1980:15).

Using traditional Marxist analysis, feminist reproduction theorists have examined the nature of women's work both in the private sphere of the home and the public sphere of paid work (Novitz, 1987). It has been shown that the value placed on 'women's work' in the home is mirrored in the value placed on the paid work that women generally participate in. This is particularly evident in the income differentials between women and men. Women, on average, earn less than their male counterparts. Statistics show us that for every dollar a New Zealand man earns, a woman earns 80 cents. In 1986, 62 percent of women, compared to 37

percent of all men, earned less than $15,000 per year. However, this certainly does not mean all women experience the same kind of exploitation. On the contrary, women are themselves separated by their class and ethnic locations. This can be seen in the startling income differentials between Maori and Pakeha women in New Zealand. For example, in 1986 as many as 75 percent of Maori female workers earned less than $15,000 per year (all figures taken from WACE, 1988).

It has been argued that schools work to reproduce a female labour force that is both capable of taking part in paid work (particularly during times of economic boom, whilst rendered inoperative during a recession), and carrying out the necessary household duties to keep the family and the 'capitalist machine' operating. In doing so, girls learn in schools the skills that will be of the most benefit to them in their primary role as chief caregivers.

The employment of women within certain sectors of the labour force produces several advantages for a capitalist social structure (Beechey, 1978); advantages related to the dual location of women within the family and the production process. For instance, it is assumed that women can be paid less because the value of their labour is considered less. On the one hand because they have less training, and on the other because they are not expected to pay the full costs of the household (assuming that they will be supported by their male partners).

Analysis of the education system suggests that girls are encouraged to accept subordinate positions in both the labour force and the family. Examination of educational demographics and statistics clearly reflects this. For example, significantly fewer girls than boys take chemistry, physics or engineering while girls dominate subjects such as human biology, home economics, typing and clothing. O'Neill (1990) argues that, despite the emergence of affirmative measures enacted to redress 'sexism', girls and women continue to be restricted

from making informed learning, vocational and life choices because of the perpetuation of traditional social stereotypes about 'gender appropriate' behaviour. By fragmenting knowledge and producing a hierarchy of male over female, these stereotypes and the subsequent sexual divisions within the labour force are generally internalised by school students. And as such, particular areas of learning are categorised as 'feminine' or 'masculine'.

Radical feminists argue that, as a group, women share a common position in capitalism, hence are united in their interests. According to this view any differences between girls' experiences of everyday life are insignificant compared with their shared experience as women. Jones (1986) debates whether this viewpoint can give us an adequate understanding of the position of all women in society. She writes:

> women's apparent relegation as a group to the secondary labour market is not in itself sufficient for an analysis of women's position in the economy. While this might be adequately descriptive of most women's waged work, it precludes analysis of their possible internally opposing class interests - particularly when class is understood in terms of control over or ownership of cultural or symbolic capital, rather than economic capital (Jones, 1986:104).

Whilst Bowles and Gintis assume that the conditioning of middle and working class boys is analogous to that of their female social counterparts, socialist feminist theorists argue that it is essential to recognize the differences between the forms of women's education and relate these to women's labour and their future class positions. Socialist feminists argue that women are not a homogeneous group; that they are separated by their relationship to the means of production.

Research suggests that working class and middle class girls and boys experience vastly different routes through the education system (Brown, 1987). For working

class girls this means training along domestic and narrow vocational lines (Griffin, 1985). For the middle classes, school experience may be different but it still poses contradictions. MacDonald (1980:16) writes that for the middle classes:

> The overt ideology of equal opportunity and equality between the sexes, although realized by the equal range of curriculum options made available to both sexes and the expressed liberalism of the teachers, may well run counter to the hidden curriculum of the school, which perpetuates the ideology of femininity as synonymous with wife and mother.

Thus, despite the fact that middle class girls participate in professional careers, other factors such as peer pressure (Griffin, 1985), the attitudes of teachers and their guidance on subject choices points girls into the typically 'feminine' professions such as teaching, social work, and nursing. Moreover, middle class girls who achieve academic qualifications are still inclined later in life to experience conflict with the idea of motherhood and paid work.

Theories of cultural reproduction

Like theories of social reproduction, cultural reproduction theories are concerned with how societies reproduce themselves. However the critical difference is that cultural reproduction theories emphasis the role of culture. Pioneers of cultural reproduction theories, Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), rejected the notion that schools mirror society. Instead, they argued, schools reproduce the existing power relations via the dominant culture.

Both Bourdieu and Bernstein argue that various types of class language and knowledge can lead to different educational paths and that schools act to reproduce

existing class structures by employing and legitimating the language and culture of the dominant group.

According to Bourdieu, class control is maintained through symbolic power rather than overt force. In other words, the culture of the dominant economic and political groups becomes the crucial element of the social system (Harker, 1984b).

Bourdieu argued that schools help preserve inequality by reflecting society's power structure. By reflecting and endorsing the culture of the dominant group in society (those controlling the economic, social and political resources) schools contribute to social reproduction. This process remains unquestioned because the school successfully maintains an image of neutrality. By upholding the idea that 'success' at school is a matter of ability and effort (meritocracy) and not privilege, schools appear neutral and devoid of any blame of 'failure'.

Using the concepts habitus and cultural capital, Bourdieu explains how domination operates in relation to school practice. He maintains that habitus is acquired from the family and embodied in the individual. Habitus refers to a set of personal attitudes which reflect a class-based social language of taste, style of presentation, knowledge, values and behaviour. Bourdieu argues that individuals are socialised in a family context to acquire a certain habitus. Children also learn expectations about their future through their families by giving them criteria by which to judge success and failure. In addition, families impart to their children a particular disposition toward the values which dominate schools. According to Bourdieu, habitus becomes the mediating link between structures, social practice, and reproduction.

Schools act to legitimize and reproduce the dominant culture, and the dominant group in society is able to exert its power by defining what it regards as

meaningful. As such, some forms of habitus constitute cultural capital as far as the school is concerned while others do not.

According to Bourdieu, the school facilitates the processes of disadvantage in five main ways: by maintaining cultural bias in all aspects of schooling, because inappropriate choices are made without the correct 'knowledge', by embodying only one 'currency' of cultural capital, by rewarding style rather than content and by rewarding other aspects (for example characteristics unique to certain social group categories) of the dominant habitus.

According to Bourdieu, cultural capital refers to the set of values, styles, and ways of thinking that are given a certain social value and status as the most highly valued social attributes. For example, for an individual from a non-dominant background to 'succeed', the appropriate cultural capital has to be acquired. Unfortunately, this has inevitable consequences for the individual's habitus.

Those who do not acquire 'cultural capital' from their family must rely on the school as their only link into the dominant culture. However, because the culture of subordinate groups is not embodied in the dominant culture of the school those from subordinate groups remain at a disadvantage because their habitus does not reflect the cultural capital recognised by the education system. That is, in order to learn what the school teaches, those from subordinate cultures must first learn the dominant culture.

In New Zealand Maori children (like all non-dominant groups) remain disadvantaged within the school system because their habitus does not reflect the cultural capital of the dominant group. Harker (1985) has drawn on the work of Bourdieu to demonstrate how Maori underachievement can be linked to the theories of habitus and cultural capital. Using early settler parliamentary debates, Harker

explains how the process of education was taken from Maori elders as a way of assimilating Maori children into European culture.

One of the major criticisms directed at Bourdieu concerns his apparent failure to link domination with material conditions. That is, he fails to consider that alongside a mis-matching of habitus and cultural capital, people from disadvantaged groups also lack the material conditions which enable them to do the things that people from privileged groups can do. For example, when addressing the issue of access to higher education one of the major issues facing working class students is whether they have the financial backing to further their education and how many hours of part-time work they will need to do. By merely concentrating on the role of ideology, Bourdieu fails to recognise that the choices of working class students (and, indeed, all students) are also grounded directly in their material conditions. The important point which Bourdieu misses is that inequality is not only mediated through cultural values but also through individual material conditions (Brown, 1987).

Whilst Bourdieu was concerned with explaining how schools reflect the culture of the dominant group in society, Bernstein was more interested in explaining other aspects of schooling which reflect the knowledge code of a culture. That is, how knowledge is transmitted (pedagogy); and how the success of the transmission is evaluated.

By introducing the categories of classification and framing, Bernstein examined the transference of knowledge in schools. In general terms, Bernstein maintained that classification and framing relationships control the organisation and passing on of knowledge. Moreover, these create distinctive forms of social relationships and ways of communicating. According to Bernstein it is the distinctive forms of communication which have the ability to shape mental structures. Because

knowledge is transmitted in codes, only students with access to those codes can benefit. Bernstein maintained that school knowledge and language are essentially middle class (Bernstein, 1979). Hence, working class children suffer a great disadvantage because for them, school knowledge is transmitted in a 'foreign language or code'.

The main criticism concerning the work of these two theorists, once again, centres around the uncompromising way in which individuals are said to be reproduced, and their complete failure to examine the actual experience of schooling from students' and teachers' points of view.

Two New Zealand educational researchers, Hughes and Lauder (1988), have utilised the cultural theories of Bourdieu in an attempt to explain how the New Zealand education system acts to reproduce an unequal social structure. They contend that:

> the interaction between class, gender, and racially structured families, youth sub-cultures and the content, structure and organisation of the school will interact with perceptions regarding the labour market to produce an individual's identity such that decisions or non-decisions will be made which determine the level of credentials achieved. Entry or failure to enter the labour market will then act so as to confirm or change the individual's identity (Hughes & Lauder, 1988:109).

They maintain that differences in school outcomes should be seen as systematic inequalities and give two reasons why (unfair) differences in school outcomes occur. Their first argument centres around the premise that scaling procedures are inherently unfair while the second is based on the existence of a class context of educational decision-making. Such views have led many educators to question the formal examination system. Rather than operating to formally select according to

merit and achievement, it is believed that examinations and assessment are used to control and legitimate the power and advantage of some groups over others.

When the school certificate examination was changed in 1968 to a single subject pass system the issue of subject difficulty was raised. Essentially it was considered that because some subjects (maths, science) are harder to pass than others (home economics, engineering) students opting to take the 'hard' subjects should be given extra considerations in the form of scaling procedures. However according to Hughes and Lauder (1988) scaling effectuates several unequal results. For instance, research demonstrates that pass rates for 'harder' subjects are consistently higher while low pass rate subjects fail to gain as many high grades.

In 1985 fewer than one percent of candidates taking clothing and textiles, home economics, typing and engineering achieved A grades, whereas ten percent of those taking Latin, physical sciences, French and other foreign languages obtained A grades. In addition to these statistics is the fact that high SES pupils are more likely to take high pass rate subjects than low SES pupils. Therefore the examination system operates against working class kids by disproportionately awarding them low school qualifications.

Those working from a Technocratic-Meritocratic stand-point do not regard these trends as systematic inequalities. Rather, they argue that working-class students experience a greater percentage of subject failure because they attempt more of the type of subjects with low pass rates. In addition, working class students do not attempt 'hard' subjects because they believe it unlikely that they will pass. According to this theory scaling procedures are necessary in order to maintain a fair system. As such, the higher working-class failure rate is also regarded as fair.

The second theory given by Hughes and Lauder (1988) as to why the education system remains unequal cites the existence of a class context of educational decision-making. Using their phase two data, Hughes and Lauder have shown how class differences in examination success occur by examining some of the processes through which educational decision-making occurs.

Hughes and Lauder maintain that educational decisions are made in relation to a specific set of rules and aims and this process is more likely to be based on factors such as class, gender or ethnicity than pure ability. They suggest that educational decision-making tends to reflect the collective wisdom of the class, race and/or gender in which each individual exists. Working class students are thus more likely to base educational decisions upon criteria of significance to their class, and the same theory applies for girls, middle class students and so on. However, it is the dominant group which understands the aims and advantages of education and can therefore use education for their own benefit. In comparison, in most cases (in New Zealand Jones, 1986 found otherwise) the working classes see what schools have to offer as alien.

Hughes and Lauder (1988) and Lauder et al (1992) established a profile of types of decision-making. They found that, unlike middle class students, working class students do not have a common wisdom regarding school; they either follow the 'tacit collective wisdom' of their group or depend on good fortune. Because schooling is problematic for members of the working class it elicits a variety of responses. In contrast, students from professional, managerial, and wealthy backgrounds tend to follow one wisdom. That is, to assume going to university is both a normal and useful move. An example of this is provided in the following statement made by a middle class girl of academic parents:

> like I never considered doing anything else but coming to university... it just seemed natural to go to university, after school, just like part of the school really (Lauder et al, 1992:15).

Some working class students operate according to a instrumental view. This is where the aim of school is to get a 'good' working class job. For example, one girl from a working class background makes the following comment:

> They always wanted us to do well so that we had qualifications when we left. I knew I'd have to stay at school until I got UE. Mum said 'if you don't get it you're going back till you do' (Lauder et al, 1992:28).

Alternatively, some working class kids choose to take a stance of 'active resistance' (see Willis 1977). In regards to participation at university, it was found that working class students were not prepared to take what they saw as the possible risk of failure. This can clearly be seen in the following statement by a working class pupil:

> I didn't see any point in going to university unless I wanted to be a vet or something. I don't see the point in going. Look at all the others who go, they just waste time, mess around. And I see the ones who go to university to be teachers and they didn't pass. One went to be a vet and they didn't pass so that's a year wasted. They're on the dole now (Lauder et al, 1992:29).

MacDonald (1980) has developed a critique of Bourdieu and Bernstein, and an analysis of traditional reproduction theory from a feminist perspective. Whilst she has been critical of their failure to account for gender, she remains deeply influenced by their work. Like Bernstein, MacDonald has developed a theory of codes which is class based. However hers is significantly different as it is also based on gender and therefore seeks to expose the structural and interactional features of gender reproduction and conflict in families, schools, and work places. According to MacDonald (1980:22), by utilising this theoretical framework:

> it is possible to investigate the ways in which schooling transmits a specific gender code whereby individuals' gender identity and gender roles are constructed under the school's classification system. The boundaries between the appropriate activities, interests, and expectations of future work for the two sexes are maintained, and the relations and hierarchies between the two are determined by such a gender code.

MacDonald's main point is that girls negotiate and construct their own gendered identities through different definitions of what it means to be a woman from their families, their peers, the school, the media etc; and that this involves both contradictions and conflicts.

Theories of cultural production

Production theories differ from reproduction theories in that the former maintain that it is theoretically imperative to account for the role of human agency in the reproduction of class societies. Production theories provided an avenue for educationalists to see schools as more than reproductive 'black boxes', and students as more than passive subjects. Instead, they emphasize the way in which participants produce culture and ideology in school. These types of analyses make it possible for us to see that students do not necessarily accept the school's ideology passively, but that they can also reject what the school has to offer. Hence, cultural production theories are primarily concerned with examining the ways in which both individuals and classes exert their own experience, both contesting and resisting the ideological and material forces imposed upon them.

Advocates of production theories maintain that students and teachers produce both meaning and culture through their own resistance and consciousness. Jones (1986:14) explains that:

> the reproduction of the structure and relations of the socio-economic order is not an abstract, dominating force, but embedded dynamically within the real cultural lives of people; it is accompanied by people actively living and making sense of their everyday existence. Hence, the understandings and practices by which people organise their everyday lives must be central elements in any explanations of social reproduction.

The difficulty with notions of structure and agency, according to Jones (1986), is in striking a balance between explanations which only consider dominating power relations and those which favour only human agency. She describes the fine line we must walk in order to establish a theory which adequately takes into account all aspects of inequality, and makes the following recommendation:

> A tightrope must be walked between the two inadequate extremes of human agency conceptualised on the one hand independently active and creative and, on the other, as a mere reflection of structural forces. The active-yet-structured nature of everyday life must be brought together dialectically within any adequate analysis of human activity (Jones, 1986:14).

One of the most influential production theorists, Willis (1977) was concerned with explaining the processes through which working class boys resist and help produce hegemonic ideology and power. In his book Learning to Labour, Willis studied a group of working class boys he called 'the lads', who rejected the school's ideology, values and knowledge. In this in-depth examination of the sub-culture of the working class boys, Willis demonstrates how 'the lads' come to challenge the school's ideology of free and open competition. In doing so, Willis found that due to the nature of their resistance, 'the lads' were relegated to the lowest status jobs in society.

Early ethnographic studies into male counter-school culture portray working class culture as experienced solely by males. This style of analysis has led feminist researchers to question the reliability of working class culture described by male sociologists. Feminist theorists in the sociology of education condemn male sociologists and mainstream sociology for being 'blind' to aspects of culture common to women (McRobbie, 1980). Moreover, feminist researchers have questioned whether Willis' failure to account for the sexist oppression inherent in the male working class culture has inevitably resulted in a double failure to account for the full dynamics of working class culture and life. In response, a number of feminist researchers have turned to examinations of (mostly) girls' anti-social and counter-school groups, thus offering alternative ethnographic studies which raise new and important questions regarding the interchange of gender, class, and ethnicity in the lives of working class girls. These will be dealt with in the following chapter.

Feminist cultural theory is based on the premise that women and men interact in and with society. Like men, women are credited with the ability to negotiate their reality and also resist domination. The critical difference is that feminist cultural theorists recognise that because women are oppressed by both sexism and class, the form of resistance they take is different. Similarly, women of differing class and ethnic backgrounds have different experiences of school, and come up against varying expectations on the part of teachers (Jones, 1988).

Essentially mainstream theories in the sociology of education have sought to explain the role of education in the reproduction of social and cultural inequalities. Past theoretical analyses have given schools unprecedented power, preferring to regard schools as institutions involved in social sorting to meet the requirements of capitalism. Later investigations into the actual lived experience of students and

school settings revealed the simplicity of previous explanations, and an entirely new set of events. Although primarily aimed at an examination of male subcultures, feminist sociologists were quick to point out the 'gender-blind' inadequacies of early cultural studies. And as such, research into the actual educational experiences of girls has raised an entirely new debate concerning the nature of society. Sociologists are now incorporating into their analyses an awareness of both cultural and structural explanations in order to understand the various class demands for education.

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[1] The labels 'working', 'middle', and 'upper' class were classified according to the revised Elley-Irving (1976) six point scale. Categories 1 and 2 have been labelled 'Upper Class'. This comprises managerial and professional occupations. Category 3 is labelled Middle Class and comprises technical clerical and skilled occupations, while categories 4, 5 and 6 have been labelled 'Working Class' and comprise unskilled manual occupations. University education is considered to be primarily for the reproduction of the middle classes.

CHAPTER 2
GENDER, CLASS, RACE AND SCHOOLING

The 'mainstream' theories, outlined in the preceding chapter, have given feminist sociologists of education a starting point from which to develop explanations that account for the unique experiences of women and girls in the education system. What I would now like to do is briefly explain how students learn in schools the 'appropriate' behaviours required by a society unevenly structured upon gender, class and race. I shall then discuss the influence and significance of feminist cultural production theories on the sociology of education and seek to explain the interconnection between family, schooling and work in the lives of working class girls and women.

Socialist feminists have been both deeply influenced by and critical of Neo-Marxist theories in the sociology of education. As a consequence the focus of feminist analyses has been on an examination of Bowles and Gintis' theory of gender relations. Basically Bowles and Gintis (1976) maintained that the sexual division of labour within the wider society is reproduced not in schools, but in the family, and it is the family which ensures that girls and women enter traditionally female types of paid and unpaid labour. Furthermore, Bowles and Gintis argued that the family environment is very different from the world of paid work. Socialist feminists see these explanations as inconsistent and contradictory. They criticise Bowles and Gintis for failing to recognise that girls and boys have vastly different experiences in the school system, and argue that they neglect to account for the sexist content of the school curriculum.

Althusser (1971) has been similarly criticised. He maintained that the family and the school are the most powerful ISA's. However, he has been accused of being

gender-blind; concentrating on class domination, and failing to explain the ways in which patriarchal ideology is transmitted in the school (MacDonald, 1980). Furthermore, Althusser does not adequately deal with the interaction of the family with education. In contrast, socialist feminist educators argue that in order to deliver a complete explanation for social and cultural reproduction, research must take into account the dynamics of gender within the family-school relationship.

The recognition that the interaction between the family and school is central in the reproduction of class and gender relations has led many socialist feminists to turn to other theoretical models (Jones, 1986; Middleton, 1988). In particular, they have drawn on the work of Bourdieu.

Briefly, Bourdieu (1977) argued that children acquire through the family the habitus of their parents' class/cultural group. For members of the middle class this does not mean a physical/material acquisition, rather it involves the acquisition of 'cultural capital'. Cultural capital works in favour of middle class students by providing them with the kind of 'habitus' which is validated in the top academic streams of schools. Therefore, while working class children find their particular habitus invalidated at school, middle class children have theirs validated. Moreover, the cultural capital of middle class students ultimately helps them to gain real capital because it enables them to secure high qualifications and well paying/professional jobs (Harker, 1984a).

Who's getting taught what?

Schools contribute a great deal to the power relations in the wider society by fostering certain patterns of relationships between students and teachers (Apple &

Weis, 1983; Spender, 1982; Mahoney, 1985). A substantial and growing body of research supports the notion that teachers and students unknowingly interact in ways which reproduce inequalities in our society (Mahoney, 1985; Weiler, 1988; Kelly, 1988; Newton, 1988; Jones, 1986, 1988; Alton-Lee et al, 1990). In addition, serious questions are now being raised about the curriculum knowledge to which children are exposed. For example, Alton-Lee et al (1990) questioned whether the curriculum may be engendering in children undesirable perceptions of their gender and racial identity.

Mahoney (1985) maintains that it is the male experience which has been put forward as the norm in the curriculum. She argues that men have historically controlled mainstream knowledge while women's concerns have been largely ignored and suppressed. In addition, ideas on education have tended to concentrate on boys and their experiences. Meanwhile girls' education has been directed toward training as wives and mothers and according to their social class.

According to Alton-Lee et al (1990) three factors contribute to the maintenance of a male dominated, capitalist society. These are the devaluing of subordinate cultures in schools, students' rejection of schooling and the fact that people remain unaware of the school's hidden inequalities. This implies that:

> Whether the children identify with groups other than their own gender or racial groups and abnegate their own group, or whether they experience curriculum as an outsider, the effects may be seriously damaging. Apart from the effects on the children's identities and perceptions of their own status those processes influence children from the dominant and the subordinate groups to reproduce the power relations 'apparent' in society (Alton-Lee et al, 1990:21).

Alton-Lee et al (1990) also offer convincing evidence that the school knowledge children are exposed to reflects and reinforces the experiences of boys whilst it

devalues the experiences of girls. Using observers, video recordings and broadcast microphones, Alton-Lee et al were able to capture and record a wide range of information about the way pupils experience curriculum content. From this research they concluded that curriculum knowledge is more relevant to the lives of Pakeha men and this tends to undermine the children's knowledge of women. Furthermore, it was found that female characters and experiences were generally excluded from the curriculum. Where women were mentioned the predominant pattern was their subordination and inferiority. Girls and boys were found to have considerable difficulty remembering what they had learned about women and were more likely to attribute what they did know about women's achievements to men. Thus children who do not belong to the dominant group in society grow up learning that their unique qualities are less important and less valid (Alton-Lee et al, 1990).

It must not be overlooked that society is also unequally structured upon ethnicity. In New Zealand, children belonging to Maori and Pacific Island groups fail to benefit from education in the same way as their Pakeha peers. Thomas (1984) concluded that teachers harbour racist opinions about Maori pupils because they consistently underestimate the verbal skills of this particular group of children. The Pacific Island girls in Jones' (1986) research failed to receive the same type of teacher assistance as the Pakeha girls. That is, instead of learning to get involved in active discussions about subject matter (which promotes effective learning), the Pacific Island girls were encouraged to merely copy the subject material, which ultimately contributed to their failure in school examinations. The children in Alton-Lee et al's (1990) research were found to identify with Pakeha male roles. In fact, it was found that Pakeha girls defended women's subordination or invisibility in the curriculum. It was theorised that for Maori boys', 'success' depended on their willingness to disassociate themselves from their own culture. However doing this has been proven to be detrimental to a person's self-esteem (Pere, 1988).

Kelly's (1988) international meta-analysis of 81 studies came to the conclusion that teachers are far more likely to interact with boys than girls. Moreover, she found that the great majority of teachers failed to realise what they were doing, honestly believing that they interact with boys and girls in exactly the same way. Newton (1988) also found that the teacher in her study interacted more with boys than girls. Her findings were alarming because the particular teacher concerned had actually expressed her commitment to equity in education for girls.

Mahoney (1985) argues that the political dimension of co-education is one of men's power over women, and points out a number of ways in which boys exert their power over girls in a school setting. Her examination of teacher/pupil interaction patterns revealed a number of disturbing patterns of male dominance and control. For example, it was found that girls are physically harassed in the playground and subjected to psychological put-downs in the classroom. Boys are also able to exert their power over girls by having primary access to educational resources, such as monopoly of teacher time, attention, physical and linguistic space. She also found that the attitudes of teachers and their expectations contributed to the view that boys are more capable than girls.

Russell (1986) maintains that while the women teachers in her research admired and respected their male students, male teachers did not feel the same way about their female students. Furthermore, teachers were found to devalue girls' achievements. Thus, any achievement by the girls was attributed to their docility and conscientiousness. Indeed, some teachers tried to explain away girls' success by saying girls did well because:

> their work habits were so good and they read more (Russell, 1986:356).

She argues that girls who decline in achievement and do relatively poorly by the end of high school are perceived by their teachers as achieving according to their ability. In contrast, boys who exhibit the same results are seen by teachers as underachieving:

> Thus for boys there was seen to be an aspect of low achievement not strictly related to ability; but this possibility was not suggested for girls (Russell, 1986:357).

It seems that no matter what girls do they are not given the same credit afforded to boys. The girls in Russell's sample who did achieve high grades in the upper years were regarded as "plodders", rather than clever, in the eyes of their teachers.

Assessments made on the basis of gender also reflect those made about class and achievement. Members of the dominant group in society are assumed to be more capable but unmotivated, whereas students belonging to the subordinate social group are simply judged as intellectually unable (Russell, 1986). The malign implication of all these forms of oppression is that by celebrating the male, middle class and Pakeha experience as the 'norm' we are unwittingly sending messages to our female, Maori and working class children that their experiences are somehow inferior.

Accounting for gender, class and ethnicity

Willis's (1977) research on working class 'lads' and how they get working class jobs has had an international impact on the sociology of education. It has also been relevant to the concerns of feminist sociologists of education, as a central theme of the study is the examination of patriarchy from a cultural perspective.

Feminist researchers have criticised Willis and other male Marxist ethnographers for two reasons. Firstly, although their accounts are about boys and male youth cultures, they are referred to as studies about 'kids' and 'youth cultures'. Therefore, past accounts by male ethnographers have tended to ignore girls' experiences, whilst believing they are speaking on behalf of all children. Girls, if mentioned, are merely referred to as 'birds', 'scrubbers' and 'hangers on' (Llewellyn, 1980). Secondly, such accounts have underplayed the role of the family in cultural reproduction, focusing centrally on the school and workplace. In contrast, feminist ethnographers have sought to include girls and women as active agents, and in doing so have included an examination of the family's influence, as well as the influence of schooling and the labour market. What these studies have demonstrated is that to ignore the cultural world of women risks distorting any understanding of the complete nature of working class resistance or culture.

Feminist researchers argue that, unlike Willis' 'lads', it is not always possible to identify a particular group of anti-school girls (Jones, 1986). Griffin (1985) suggests that for girls the situation is far more complex. Instead of identifying 'good girls' or 'trouble-makers', she suggests that we must understand the meanings associated with these categories, and the ways they are used to distinguish between groups of students by teachers and by the young women themselves.

Feminist sociologists believe that Willis's failure to examine the private sphere of the family rendered the experiences of women and girls invisible. McRobbie and Garber (1975) suggest that it is incorrect to regard girls as marginal. Instead they maintain that there are structural differences between the two sexes. Therefore, while girls are central in any theory, they operate in a different but subordinate set of activities. McRobbie and Garber (1975:211) explain how:

> If women are 'marginal' to the male cultures of work it is because they are central and pivotal to a subordinate area, which mirrors, but in a complementary and subordinate way, the 'dominant' masculine arenas. They are 'marginal' to work because they are central to the subordinate, complementary sphere of the family.

Thus, unlike Willis (1977) who focused mainly on the relationship between the school and the workplace, feminist theorists have begun to look at the role of the family in the cultural production of teenagers' working class consciousness (Connell et al, 1982; McRobbie, 1978; Jones, 1986).

Connell et al (1982) highlight the significance of the family, arguing that families have a distinct influence on the decisions children make. They point out that the family's relationship with the school must be seen historically; that is, understanding the way it has developed over time. Weiler (1988:20) suggests that this does not mean public and private spheres are separate:

> but that because boys and girls, men and women, are associated in sometimes very rigid ways with one sphere or the other, they work out individual and collective cultural responses that are quite different, though at the same time complementary.

Therefore in order to fully understand the experiences of girls as well as boys we must examine the private sphere of the family, as well as the labour market and school.

Feminist theorists are themselves not unified in their beliefs about the nature of women's oppression. Some have been heavily criticised for neglecting to account for oppressive experiences associated with class and ethnicity, as well as gender. Socialist feminists maintain that only by accounting for gender, class and ethnicity can we begin to understand the nature of women's oppression. Both Jones (1986)

and Weiler (1988), call for a synthesis between critical educational theories and early feminist analyses. Weiler (1988:4) explains why:

> Neither is adequate on its own. While critical educational theory has largely failed to recognise sexism as a significant issue to be addressed and as a result has failed to consider the ways in which gender has been both produced and reproduced through texts and material practices, existing feminist analyses of schools have too often failed to recognise schools as sites of ongoing struggle over both knowledge and social relationships.

One major aspect of the cultural world experienced by girls and women (and largely ignored by male sociologists) is the domestic responsibilities of housework and childcare. Young women's domestic responsibilities have been shown to affect their schooling, and the move from school to university or the job market (Griffin, 1985). Griffin found women to be overwhelmingly responsible for housework and childcare. Of all the girls in her study, white middle class girls were least likely to have domestic responsibilities (20.6% as compared to 51% of white working class, and 52% of black working class girls). In addition she found that girls' non-attendance at school because of housework or childcare duties was treated less seriously than the truancy of their male peers. This suggests there is a perception that schooling is less important for girls than it is for boys.

Young women's expectations about their future position in family life revealed some further interesting trends. Griffin (1985) found that heterosexuality, marriage and motherhood were seen as inevitable 'facts of life' for most young women. Whereas white and black working class girls did not anticipate being out of paid work for as long as their middle class counterparts, all girls saw their future employment being influenced by childcare and domestic responsibilities. Therefore young women were encouraged to consider subjects and courses with a view to their future domestic careers.

Researching girls' lives: schooling, work and family

The concept of resistance has been used to highlight the different ways in which boys and girls attach meaning to their experiences (McRobbie, 1978). It has also led to a growing (but still very small) number of cultural studies which explore the lives of women and girls. At the forefront of such challenges is McRobbie's (1978) ethnography of a group of working class girls at a Birmingham Youth Club in England. McRobbie maintains that it is impossible to understand the actions and experiences of girls through a class analysis alone. She writes that:

> ...their culture would be linked to and partly determined by, although not mechanically so, the material position occupied by the girls in society (1978:97).

McRobbie maintains that working class girls suffer a dual oppression in both capitalism and patriarchy. She points out that the private, domestic world of sexuality and the public world of paid work operate together to structure the experiences of working class girls. She explains how this happens:

> The culture of adolescent working class girls can be seen as a response to the material limitations imposed on them as a result of their class position, but also as an index of, and response to their sexual oppression as women. They are both saved by and locked within the culture of femininity (1978:108).

Her analysis goes beyond that of past research into youth sub-culture by demonstrating how working class girls actively participate in the construction of their own lives. She maintains that girls assert their sexuality as an act of resistance to accepted norms of 'appropriate' female behaviour, thereby gaining a certain amount of power. In addition, the girls reject the school's values by challenging the dominant idea of what a 'good girl' should behave like.

By exploring girls' lives in depth, Angela McRobbie establishes parallels between her findings and those of Paul Willis. She concludes that like Willis's 'lads', the girls in her study actively participate in the construction of their own lives. Whilst the 'lads' demonstrated their masculinity as manual workers, resulting in unskilled and poorly paid jobs, McRobbie's girls emphasised their femininity in traditional ways, resulting in their exploitation not only in the privacy of their own homes but also in the public world of paid work.

In addition to examining women's shared experiences, subsequent feminist ethnographies have focused on women's ethnic and social class identities. Thomas (1980), for example, studied two groups of Australian anti-school girls, one from a middle class and one from a working class school. In looking at the gender specific nature of the girls' oppression and resistance, she focused on the private, domestic world of sexuality and the family, as well as on the public world. Like McRobbie (1978), she maintained that the experiences and actions of girls cannot be explained solely through a gender analysis.

The girls in Thomas's study rejected the school's views about 'good' behaviour. By asserting their own sexuality in situations deemed 'inappropriate' by the school, the girls challenged the dominant view of the 'good girl'. More specifically, they used their sexuality in opposition to the authority of the school and to middle class definitions of femininity. By exaggerating their sexuality the girls created their own form of power. However sexuality was only used in the context of situations defined by the school and was mainly characteristic of working class girls. Anti-school middle class girls were more likely to be immersed in the ideology of romance (McCabe, 1981; Gordon, 1989), viewing marriage as a way out of school and the labour market. The girls also remained cautious about flaunting their sexuality in the school and entering sexual relationships for fear of being labelled 'loose'.

This feminine attitude toward sexuality is further supported by Wilson's (1978) study of 'delinquent' or 'semi-delinquent' girls in a northern England working class community. She found that girls categorized themselves into three groups based on sexual activity; virgins, one-man girls, and lays. Most of the girls categorized themselves as one-man girls, which meant they engaged in sex, but with an ideology of romance and the intention of marriage.

Using the concept of resistance to address the complexities of class and gender experiences of working class girls has also helped to raise interesting questions about the nature of race in relation to class and gender. Fuller's work (1980) is particularly intriguing because it highlights issues about the nature and implications of girls' resistance in relation to race, class and gender. Her research into the lives of black girls in a British Comprehensive school was unique in that it called into question assumptions about (working class) black pupils and about the development of school-based sub-cultures.

Unlike Willis's (1977) working class 'lads', and McRobbie's (1978) anti-school girls, the working class black girls in Fuller's study were strongly committed to achievement through the job market, and strong believers in the value of education and educational qualifications. These school achievements were regarded as a necessary preparation for the 'good' jobs which the girls hoped to obtain. However, although the girls had high aspirations and achieved well in public exams they were not pro-school. Instead, they held the view that school was 'boring', 'trivial' and 'childish'. However they did not define it as 'irrelevant'. On the contrary, this group of Afro-Caribbean girls attached a particular importance and significance to academic achievement.

Unlike most high aspirers and achievers, the black girls in this study exhibited the kinds of behaviour towards teachers and other pupils normally associated with a reputation as a 'bad' pupil. That is, they conformed to stereotypes of the good pupil only in so far as they worked conscientiously at school work and homework. In class they displayed a distaste for behaviours associated with the good pupil. Fuller describes their behaviour:

> Neither meek and passive nor yet aggressive, and obviously confrontationalist in their stance towards teachers, the girls were something of a puzzle to some of their peers and teachers (1980:60).

Three explanations help to explain the motivations behind these behaviours. First Fuller explains, to be seen as a 'good' pupil laid them open to the discovery of their academic and job ambitions, which ran the risk of inviting ridicule from those peers with whom the girls compared themselves. According to Fuller, in this case their behaviour is a type of 'smoke-screen', used to confuse others and enable the girls to retain the friendship of their peer group without giving up their aspirations. Secondly, the girls did not see themselves as 'good' pupils, and did not want to be compared with this group. Thirdly, the girls believed that other highly aspiring pupils placed too much emphasis on teachers' opinions in relation to pupils' success. That is, because public examinations were marked by people who did not know the candidates, pupils could expect to pass examinations on the quality of their work and not on the quality of their relationships with teachers.

In describing some of the difficulties of her own experience as a working class girl in a Grammar School, Payne (1980) attempts to develop a more general picture of the class and sexist context within which secondary education takes place. She examines the many contradictions faced by working class girls educated within a society that generally does not fully educate this group. Specifically, from her own school experience she compares the school's value system in relation to the value

system of her working class neighbourhood. Payne maintains that all women experience a sexist curriculum, limited choice in post-secondary education and employment options that are confined to what are regarded as 'gender appropriate'. However she also emphasises that these experiences differ according to one's class and ethnic location. For example, she found that the school's values are often contradictory to the values of the working class. She describes how the easy identification of the Grammar School uniform resulted in class conflict for her as a working class girl:

> I wore the uniform without too much suffering at school but it was the greatest source of embarrassment to me beyond the school gates. I can remember being terrified that someone from my neighbourhood might see me wearing it. I was worried that I might be regarded as a 'college pud' or a snob by my peers (1980:14-15).

The middle class ideology of the school also failed to accommodate the real need for working class kids to work part-time. Payne (1980) noted that her school (a middle class one) totally disapproved of the Saturday job she was forced to do out of economic necessity. She also described the existence of middle class values about language, and the accepted form of speech:

> In terms of class I had to learn to 'speak properly', that is, like middle class people, and in terms of gender I had to learn to speak politely, that is, talking like a lady (Payne, 1980:15-16).

Middle class ideals about 'appropriate' forms of language posed serious personal difficulties for this working class girl, essentially because these values clashed with those endorsed by the working class. Thus outside the school gates Payne had to abandon her middle class school linguistics. She explains that whilst most of the time she managed to slip from one to the other this was not always successful. In the following passage she explains the constant anguish of making mistakes and how she learned to cope:

> I was in constant terror of being exposed as a 'freak'. My way of dealing with this threat was to over-react. In my home environment I made a concerted effort to appear as 'one of the girls' and to do this I felt obliged to be louder than anyone else, to swear more, just to prove I wasn't different and hadn't been corrupted by the grammar school (Payne, 1980:16).

Jones's ethnography (1986, 1988, 1991) is at the forefront of research into the unique nature of girls' schooling in New Zealand. She focused on two groups of fifth form girls in an inner city all girls secondary school, examining and highlighting processes of social reproduction in girls' schooling. One group consisted of predominantly working class Pacific Island girls (a 'mid-to-low' stream). The second group consisted of almost entirely middle class Pakeha girls (a 'high' stream). Like previous cultural theorists, her primary motivation involved the examination of how human beings both produce and are produced by the social structure in which they live. Unlike the work of Willis, the girls in this study were found to accept or incorporate the dominant ideology rather than resist it.

Like Fuller (1980), Jones's (1986) research called into question the assumption that working class students in 'low' streams are typically anti-school. She explained how the Pacific Island girls placed a very high value on school achievement and tended to believe in the meritocracy of the school system. She also revealed how this group of girls remained innocently unaware of the inherent inequalities associated with the school system that they were participating in.

Jones criticises past sociological accounts for focusing exclusively on the actions of a narrow group of 'anti-social' working class kids. She writes:

> There is a silence regarding the countless working class students who have incorporated the school's meritocratic ideology, and

> whose days are spent coping and 'trying hard' despite the almost inevitable outcome of school failure and future degrading and exploitative conditions (Jones, 1986:23).

Similar criticisms have also been directed at 'radical' theories of schooling in New Zealand. Jones (1986) argues that like their overseas counterparts, New Zealand authors have failed to acknowledge the particular position of women in the New Zealand labour market. She has also criticised some feminist researchers for failing to give an accurate analysis of the relationship between women and education. She comments that some feminists have made the naive presumption that all women are united, therefore exploited in the same way. Spender (1981), for example fails to account for all groups of girls and women in society, maintaining that oppressive structural power relations are not present in single-sex environments. Like Mahoney (1985), Jones criticises this assumption for neglecting to account for the operation of other power dynamics; ones which mean some groups continue to have only 'subordinate roles' available to them, even in single-sex environments. By acknowledging not only the influence of gender but class and race as well, Jones (1988) is able to point out the measurable differences in girls' school experiences. She writes:

> knowledge is 'differentially distributed' on the basis of race and class to different class groups of girls in the classroom. Girls as members of race and class groups receive quite different knowledge about learning and teaching and about their own ability (Jones, 1988:144).

For example, Jones found that although Pakeha and Pacific Island students both try to get information from the teacher, they learn different ways of achieving this objective, and hold different beliefs about their ability to do so. As a result school outcomes vary according to class and ethnicity. According to Jones (1988:151), the school plays a major role in this process. She writes:

> In a complex way, the school simultaneously rewards the middle class Pakeha cultural norms of learning and communication, and helps (re) produce those 'successful' patterns in these students. Conversely, the school is active in penalising the cultural patterns of communication of the Pacific Island girls, at the same time (re) producing those very patterns it penalises.

Unlike the anti-social boys who disliked school in Willis's (1977) study, the girls in Jones's study generally stated they wanted to stay at school because it provided a place to be with their friends, and a means of obtaining future employment. In addition, while they often demonstrated 'troublesome' and 'disruptive' behaviour, the Pacific Island girls' behaviour was found to be less contradictory than at first perceived. The author explains why:

> While the girls believed that school offered opportunity, their particular (meritocratic) interpretation of this meant that they saw the fourth form as irrelevant to 'opportunity' (Jones, 1988:143).

While the Pacific Island girls in Jones's study valued school achievement and believed school qualifications offered the opportunity to get a 'decent' job, most other studies have suggested that working class students in 'low' streams are typically anti-school.

Jones suggests that the nature of the working class Pacific Island girls' view of schooling can be traced back to liberal theories of education which view schools as neutral sanctuaries, where chances are handed out in return for individual ability and motivation. According to theories such as these, school offers everyone the opportunity for social mobility and individual achievement. Subsequent failure to gain occupational mobility is attributed to individual inability, or lack of motivation to take up the opportunity offered by the labour market.

The girls in Jones's (1986) study did not challenge the school's apparent universal offer of academic and thus occupational opportunity. For these girls, going for School Certificate (SC) provided the chance to get a 'decent job', and avoid the economic lives of their parents, which they cited as the product of their parent's lack of education.

These differences in research findings have led Jones to question the concept of 'resistance' (Jones, 1985) and to argue for concrete situations to test these kinds of assumptions. She suggests that previous accounts may have been made at the expense of others. She writes:

> If the primary research had been on, say, working class non-white girls, as mine is, then perhaps it might be a different animal from the one portrayed in the literature (Jones, 1985:8).

Therefore while boys have been shown to be disruptive and aggressive in quite visible and vocal ways, girls have been shown to resist in a number of ways. The difference is that girls' deviant behaviour in school is often treated and perceived differently by teachers and other students. For example, it is often seen in relation to their sexuality (Griffin, 1985).

In an examination of behaviour Christine Griffin (1985) found that girls avoided the control of teachers by skipping classes for a smoke or a chat, by reading girls' magazines or passing notes in class, and by daydreaming in class. Moreover, girls resisted the discipline of school uniforms by deliberately failing to meet uniform regulations.

Jones examined incidences of teacher-student interaction in the classroom in order to answer two important questions. That is, how the school operates to the benefit

of some girls and not others, and why the positions girls occupy in school tend to strongly reflect the same girls' socio-economic position.

Subsequent examinations revealed that teachers interacted quite differently with Pakeha and Pacific Island students and that both groups of girls learnt very different things about 'what to do' in the classroom, and 'how to be a student'. They also learnt quite different things about the value of their own ideas and work.

Jones demonstrated how different class groups get different opportunities to speak in the classroom. For example, it was found that teachers directed more questions towards Pakeha girls, while Pacific Island girls were less likely to answer questions directed at the whole class. This means that, in addition to not having the same opportunity to learn school knowledge, Pacific Island and Pakeha girls learn different things about the process of learning and their role and ability in that process. For Pacific Island girls, the implication is that they have less chance to learn new knowledge. The Pacific Island girls' ability to learn effectively was once more compounded by the fact that they did not make a habit of expressing themselves and interpreting material. These skills have been shown to be critical for acquiring a successful understanding of school knowledge. Instead of interacting in a mutual exchange of ideas and opinions the Pacific Island girls learned that it was acceptable to be 'silent, to listen, to receive'. Jones (1988:147) explains the consequences of this type of learning in the following passage:

> Through their teachers' participation with them in patterns of talk in which these girls are relatively silent, the Pacific Island girls do not learn that it is important for them to have ideas and express them.

In contrast, the Pakeha girls gained most of the teacher's attention and confidently interacted with the subject matter. As a result the Pakeha girls learnt that

successfully acquiring school knowledge includes the expression and acceptance of one's own ideas and thoughts.

Jones argues that schools do not merely impose different ways of communicating and definitions of 'being a student'. Students themselves contribute to this process by bringing a range of cultural beliefs and values to the classroom. For the Pakeha girls this translates into using the teacher as a resource, understanding knowledge and expressing it orally. However for the Pacific Island girls (and indeed any culturally different group) this type of interaction is not regarded as a natural and comfortable way of learning.

The values expressed by the Pakeha girls were found to be wholly inconsistent with those of the Pacific Island girls. For example, the Pacific Island girls tended to avoid eye contact with the teacher, spoke up very little, and rarely called out answers. This way of 'being a student' was reinforced by teachers, who asked Pacific Island girls fewer questions and who gave them less attention. Thus teachers unconsciously penalised Pacific Island girls knowledge of 'how to be a student', and as such ultimately contributed to the inability of Pacific Island girls to master the curriculum knowledge. This problem stems from the failure of the school system to account for or include a strategy which incorporates a range of cultural needs in the learning process.

According to Jones' research the needs of middle class Pakeha students were provided for by the school and this resulted in positive outcomes. Thus:

> these girls' beliefs about learning, and their subsequent behaviour in the classroom, are reinforced by the teachers' (usual) participation with them in soliciting and listening to their words and ideas; they are then rewarded by these girls' increased opportunity to practise skills crucial for academic success (Jones, 1988:148).

When she examined the patterns of classroom communication initiated by students, Jones found that rather than recognising the disadvantages experienced by the Pacific Island girls in the classroom, the teachers tended to legitimise Pakeha dominance. Therefore it was the Pakeha girls' concerns, needs and interests which defined what was talked about in the classroom.

In this chapter it has been explained that, in failing to recognise patriarchy as a central organising principle, early reproduction theorists were unable to explain the unique nature of womens' and girls' oppression. Therefore their explanations were incomplete. Alternatively, feminist reproduction theorists have demonstrated how society's sexual division of labour contributes to the reproduction of the unequal status quo by placing less value on 'women's activities'. Feminist theorists maintain that society's unequal sexual division of labour is reflected in all aspects of life: family, school and work. For example, in schools the curriculum is structured unequally upon a sexual division of labour which operates to devalue 'women's work'. Girls have also been shown to have less teacher time, and official forms of assessment were shown to disadvantage minority groups. In highlighting the emphasis socialist feminists place on gender, class and race I sought to demonstrate the different experiences girls have in school, and show that it is therefore naive to assume that all girls and women are oppressed in the same way.

CHAPTER 3
GENDER, CLASS, RACE AND HIGHER EDUCATION

This chapter is concerned with highlighting the social composition of people within New Zealand universities. In doing so I will show how universities are structured upon inequalities of race, class and gender. It will be argued that such categories serve to limit the access and participation of subordinate social groups at university. However, before I begin with a discussion about access and participation at university, it is important that the reader understand how I have interpreted the unique composition of New Zealand's social structure.

Defining class

The process of making judgements about social differences is an ongoing one. What one group of people regard as valuable may not be important to another. Sociologists call this system stratification. When discussing stratification, sociologists are referring to the process by which human societies evaluate themselves in a hierarchical order. Stratification includes any socially accepted system of ranking and evaluation, and has the ability to change in composition over time. Stratified systems form the basis of inequalities, and continue to appear throughout history and across cultures.

Class is merely one form of stratification. Since this study is primarily concerned with understanding the experiences of working class women it is necessary that I briefly discuss the concept of class.

When discussing social class, sociologists are generally referring to a system of economic difference which includes the evaluation of property, wealth, money, exploitation and labour. In spite of the widely held belief that New Zealand is (or has been) a classless society, if we take a look at the early European settlement of Aotearoa we can see the foundations of our present class structure. Wilkes explains how European settlers planned Aotearoa as a society based on an unequal class structure. He writes:

> ...the planners hoped New Zealand would be a successful capitalist society. It had never been planned as an equal society, but rather as a society which produced inequalities of private property more successfully than Britain (1990:73).

According to Wilkes, three factors contributed to the more rigid class structure of the twentieth century: the rise of urbanization, the emergence of the working class and the Labour Party, and the development of the middle class.

Modern sociological theories tend to define class according to a modified version of the Marxist 'bourgeoisie' and 'proletariat', while also stressing the importance of the middle class in modern societies. Class location is calculated in relation to one's relationship to the means of production and the mode of production, and can be divided into three: upper, middle and working class. Members of the class hierarchy are connected by a system of exploitation and domination. Those belonging to the upper class live off the surplus value (profit) generated by the labour of the middle and working classes. Access to the upper class is secured through ownership of capital. Self-employed people work for themselves and own the things they produce, receiving the full price for them, thereby avoiding exploitation. Middle class people are distinguished by their ability to direct, manage and control the work situation of working class people (domination). However, although the middle class has authority over the working class, they are

still exploited because, like workers, they do not own the things they produce and therefore do not receive the full value of them. Access to the middle class is primarily through the acquisition of educational credentials. Working class people do not own companies, and do not control the workplace, and are therefore both exploited and dominated. Domestic work is productive, therefore it should be included in any class analysis. Wilkes (1990) points out that unpaid domestic work, in the home, can be considered a criterion for membership of the working class. In this situation, maintaining a house, caring for children and other family members, the workers do not own the means of production and have limited control in the workplace.

In New Zealand's capitalist society, class differences and economic position have for a long time been hidden because of the comprehensive welfare state, but these differences have always existed. Particularly under the New Right policies of the past few years, class differences have become much more visible (Lauder, 1990).

Who goes to university?

In the first two chapters I demonstrated how and why the school system works disproportionately to reward students along gender, class and ethnic lines. I argued that these factors contribute to the reasons why our universities are disproportionately made up of middle class Pakeha students. Although on the surface it appears that gender is no longer an issue in regards to participation at university (with roughly equal numbers of male and female students enrolled in New Zealand universities in the 1990's), closer examination reveals that in terms of the pattern of this participation there are serious discrepancies. For instance, the unequal numbers of working class, Maori and Pacific Island women (and men)

taking advantage of higher education. Therefore, there are two issues which need to be addressed: the social, ethnic and gender composition of the student body at New Zealand universities; and the trends of women's participation.

In this chapter I shall argue that girls are socialised into a sexual division of labour. Whilst this may be modified for middle class girls, it is successful in diverting the attention of many girls away from numerous university courses. In addition, although those women who do become university students will have successfully overcome many such barriers, this does not mean that they will have been totally unaffected by their existence. Indeed, women who make non-traditional choices will in fact be more visible because of their deviation from the 'norm'. For example, working class students at university, and women who choose non-traditional courses of study may be considered 'odd' by their counterparts who have made conventional choices. This reduces the chances for working class girls to adopt an alternative style.

Kelly and Slaughter (1991) argue that state policies have been more successful at achieving equality for women in the post-secondary sector than in higher education. They suggest policies of equal access to university are often off-set by informal but highly effective socialisation processes, such as: classroom practice, peer pressure, and job-market discrimination.

The emphasis placed on gender, class and race by socialist feminists distinguishes this theory from other feminist analyses. This type of framework, is necessary when examining the question of acquisition of tertiary education. Feminist researchers have observed that women's enrolments in higher education are tending towards equalisation in a number of countries, but caution that this does not mean women have access to the same kind of education as men (Kelly & Slaughter,

1991). Other researchers have pointed out the need to assess class and ethnic issues regarding access to higher education. For example Deem (1978:85) writes:

> It is important to realise that in looking at the past and continuing difficulties experienced by women seeking access to higher education, we are considering not just sexual barriers but also class ones. Middle class women have fought their way into the hallowed fields of higher education with great effort, but the struggle for working class women to enter higher education has hardly begun.

Covert forms of discrimination have been said to prevent women from entering higher education (Deem, 1978). The processes of sex-stereotyping and curricula differentiation in schools have a strong influence on the aspirations of girls in relation to higher education (Byrne, 1978; Griffiths, 1980). Girls are either not encouraged to be high achievers or they are channelled into subject areas that have no academic relevance. There is also a tendency for women to specialise in school subjects which do not give them a free or wide choice of courses in higher education. In addition, a lack of cultural awareness and sensitivity in the education system has translated into poor standards of educational achievement by Maori and Pacific Island people in New Zealand.

It is true to say that never before have so many women in New Zealand benefited from university education. Women attained only marginally fewer Bachelors Degrees in 1990 than men, a total of 48.6 percent (All figures taken from University Summary Statistics). However, to say that all women are benefitting in the same way is to ignore the existence of race and class inequalities. European/Pakeha women were among 86 percent of the total number of women completing Bachelors Degrees. Maori women comprise only 3.1 percent. Of the total number of men and women in all ethnic categories completing Bachelors Degrees, Maori women comprise a mere 1.5 percent. For Pacific Island women the figures are even more grim. Whilst Pacific Island women represented 1.6

percent of all women completing Bachelors Degrees in 1990, they represent only .75 percent of the total numbers of students completing Bachelors Degrees.

Actual figures on class participation at university are relatively rare, and generally not recorded. Moreover, those available tend to focus on father's occupation. However figures taken by Lauder (1980) show that in 1980 36 percent of the student population at the University of Canterbury were from the top SES group one (professional), 17 percent came from SES group two (managerial, business), and 29 percent from SES group three (office, sales, technical, farmer). Only 12 percent were found to originate from SES group four (skilled, trades), 5 percent from SES group five (semi-skilled), and a mere 1 percent from the lowest SES group (unskilled). These figures were also shown to be representative of Auckland university.

It seems that women are less likely than men to complete higher academic degrees, and as such receive fewer post-graduate qualifications. For example, as a group, women comprised 44 percent of those attaining Masters Degree's from New Zealand universities in 1990. When broken down into racial and gender groups the figures uncover some startling trends. European/Pakeha women comprised 91 percent of the women completing Masters Degrees. In contrast, Maori women comprised just over one percent and less than .5 percent of students overall. Pacific Island women did slightly better than Maori women in 1990 by attaining .85 percent of all Masters Degrees, and representing 1.9 percent of all women completing Masters Degrees. In 1990 Pakeha women completed 25 percent of Doctoral Degrees, compared to 75 percent of Pakeha men. Only one Pacific Island man completed a Doctoral Degree that year. These figures demonstrate that as a group women are not achieving to the same degree as men. Moreover, in our bi-cultural society, ethnic minorities are suffering a staggering disadvantage in terms of higher educational qualifications. One implication of women's lack of

participation at post-graduate level is the pool of women from which potential academics are likely to emerge is severely reduced.

Kelly and Slaughter (1991) argue that there are no clear trends for women's participation rates in higher education. That is, whilst there is a link between economic development and inequalities in male/female higher education enrolments among the poorest nations of the world, some highly industrialised nations have been shown to demonstrate even greater inequality. However, what is apparent are the trends of women's participation within higher education.

Women do not study the same subjects as men and become segregated into distinct fields of study at university. The fields women do predominate in are generally lower paid and of a lower status than men's. Kelly and Slaughter write:

> Gender-based inequalities once, dealt with at the level of access, are transferred to educational processes (1991:6).

As far back as 1978 Deem commented on how even the 'lucky few' who do get into higher education generally take different subjects than the majority of men. Women are more likely to be found in arts courses, social sciences and education. In New Zealand, while many subjects traditionally held by men such as law, business, commerce etc have opened up opportunities for women, figures clearly indicate a continuation of a sexual division of labour in typically 'feminine' and 'masculine' subject areas of study. For example, figures covering all programmes completed in New Zealand universities show that in 1990 women made up 69 percent of Arts students (excluding overseas students), but only 4.1 percent of engineering students (compared to 96 percent for men). Moreover, in post-graduate study, even in subjects where women comprise the larger percentage of

undergraduates, women are less likely to predominate. Cynically, Deem (1978:91-92) writes:

> Indeed, it is at this point that the process of filtering out women from the world of higher education reaches its peak of efficiency.

One would think that due to the larger numbers of women studying arts courses at the undergraduate level there would be a higher percentage of women enrolled in arts courses at the postgraduate level. Not so. Figures show that even though women make up 64.2 percent of those completing Master Degrees in arts, males who make up only a small proportion of arts students (34 percent), actually comprise 36 percent of the Master's students. Thus indicating that men are still more likely to gain higher qualifications even in the subjects which women predominate in. This trend is perhaps best seen in the teaching profession, where the majority of people are women, but those who hold the power are men. Watson points out that:

> In March 1986 16 percent of primary principals were women, compared with 73 percent of full-time teachers; 16 percent of secondary principals were women, but that percentage includes girls' schools. The percentage of co-educational schools headed by women is about 3.8 percent - 8 out of 207 schools in May 1987, excluding integrated schools (1988:99).

It has been found that equal access and degree completion rates that are similar to men's do not necessarily translate into equal employment opportunities for women. Kelly and Slaughter (1991) suggest that simply obtaining a degree is probably not enough to secure high paying, high status employment. Sex segregation by field of study usually means lesser pay for women's professional work. Therefore qualifying in the same manner as men does not mean that women have similar life chances (Currie, 1991; Opper, 1991).

Women as academics

The fact that institutions of higher education incorporate women as students should not hide the fact that they remain male dominated. Research suggests that the small numbers of female role models in senior positions of responsibility and authority send out subliminal messages to women that they do not belong in these areas (Watson, 1988). Women only make up 19.2 percent of the total full-time academic staff in New Zealand universities. Closer examination reveals that even fewer women work in the higher positions of power within the university. For example, statistics of full-time university staff that show women comprise 4.7 percent of professors, 6.8 percent of associate professors, 11.9 percent of senior lecturers and 35.6 percent of lecturers. It is only in the lower positions within the university structure that women begin to catch up in number. In 1990 women comprised 48.6 percent of the assistant lecturers and 45.9 percent of the demonstrators/seasonal assistants/teaching fellows.

The sexual division of labour within the university system means that women are more likely to be non-academic staff, working in typically 'feminine' occupations. 80.4 percent of administrators, clerics and typists are women. Non-academic male staff are more likely to play a technical or computer related role, and can be found working as caretakers, cleaners and maintenance staff.

Explanations for women's rather limited involvement in the academic workforce focus on the way higher education is geared to meet men's needs. For example, it has been suggested that male forms of competition dominate academia and disadvantage women, and that marriage and the family exact greater time commitments from women academics than from men (Eliou, 1991). Women accept career patterns made for men and fail to question the legitimacy of a career pattern that provides no recognition of families (Toren, 1991). Others have looked

at the professional networks of male control that exclude women when addressing why so few women in academia (Moore & Sagaria, 1991).

The statistics I have quoted show that there are serious inequalities in access to, and participation at university. They also lend weight to the argument that New Zealand is not a classless society. Indeed, it has been shown that the probability of securing a university education, and the nature of that education are directly related to one's gender, social class and/or ethnic origin. The existence of a sexually-segregated dual labour market is an important structural factor in the explanation of women's employment patterns (Chisholm & Woodward, 1980). Therefore, unlike working class women, middle class women may have the benefit of higher education, however their experiences remain largely structured on their existence as women.

CHAPTER 4
METHODOLOGY

As argued in the first two chapters, 'mainstream' sociology of education has neglected to account for the unique experiences of women and girls (Spender, 1982). This, it has been argued, renders past accounts incomplete. Until mainstream sociologists account for the dual role of capitalism and patriarchy there can be no balanced theory of schooling.

Research in this area was first directed at the examination of groups of anti-social boys (Willis, 1977). Feminist sociologists were quick to take up the debate, focusing their accounts on the experiences of girls and women (McRobbie, 1978). Unfortunately however, much of the overseas work in this area has been directed at groups of anti-school or anti-academic students (with the exception of Fuller in Great Britain, 1980; and Jones in NZ, 1986).

This study focuses on a small group of women from working class backgrounds who have graduated from New Zealand universities. Individual interviews were conducted to gather information on university experiences, specifically recognising class, ethnic and gender variables.

I was interested in examining the unique experiences of working class women at university from a socialist feminist viewpoint. Specifically, I wanted to understand what made this group of six working class women want to go to university when the great majority of their peers were either getting married or getting jobs. In addition, I wanted to examine the kinds of experiences these women had while at university, keeping in mind that the university is very much a white male and middle class institution.

Research of this nature is meagre and relatively new in New Zealand (Jones, 1986; Middleton, 1988), however the research produced to date has added an important dimension to the international debate about youth sub-cultures. Not only does Jones demonstrate the patriarchal nature of girls' schooling, she also shows us how and why 'low' achieving students are not necessarily anti-school.

Before fully outlining the methods used for this study, it is necessary to briefly discuss some of the important points relating to the place of subjective experience in the research process.

The researcher and the research process

According to Harding (1987:3) a methodology is:

> a theory and analysis of how research does or should proceed; it includes accounts of how the general structure of theory finds its application in particular scientific disciplines.

The methodology and the focus of this research have been influenced by feminist practices and theories. My preference for a distinctly feminist methodology provides an alternative to the inadequacy of 'traditional' theorists to recognise and account for women's lives (Spender,1981). Spender argues that the neglect to account for, what she calls, 'the other half of social reality' is merely one aspect of the sexism in education. Indeed, she says sexism is inherent in all aspects of education. She writes that:

> educational practices from the organisation of institutions, to classroom interaction usually help to exclude women. From the selection of 'good' and 'worthwhile' research topics to the

> methodologies which are employed in research, the sexism of education is blatant (Spender, 1981:157).

Although 'traditionalists' would maintain there is no one cohesive unifying framework for education, Spender points out that what is 'normally' analysed in the social sciences is a product of male experience, and therefore represents a patriarchal educational paradigm.

Mainstream sociology has led us believe that the male experience constitutes an impartial account of that experienced by all. According to James (1986) women's lack of profile in sociology has important consequences for the study of gender relations. For example, the focus of traditional social science on men's experiences and what appears problematic for men fails to acknowledge that these experiences may not be problematic at all from the perspective of women. Defining what is in need of study only from the perspective of bourgeois, white men's experiences leads to what Harding calls, a:

> partial and even perverse understanding of social life (1987:7).

Therefore, the questions that are asked, and perhaps even more significantly the questions that are not asked can give us an indication of the adequacy of our understanding. As such it is imperative that women develop new ways of conceiving themselves and their relations with others.

Feminist methodology seeks to fill the void left by mainstream sociology. That is, by beginning the inquiry with what appears problematic from the perspective of women's experiences. This point seemed particularly relevant to this research as I had, prior to this study, been part of several conversations which explored issues concerning working class women's experiences at university.

From a feminist perspective gender is regarded as central to the construction of all social relations. Moreover, it is women's experiences in the plural which provide the new resources for research. There is no 'woman' or 'women's' experience. Instead we need to see that gender experiences vary across the cultural categories within every class, race and culture in the sense that women's and men's experiences, aspirations and interests differ according to their individual class, race and culture. Likewise, within the context of this research we will find experiences of conflict from university educated women from working class and different ethnic backgrounds.

Bev James (1986) warns us not to assume that all women are working towards the same goals and that a woman researcher will automatically benefit from knowing what is going on in her participant's life. Rather, she reminds us that because women are separated by their class and ethnicity their experiences will automatically differ in many important respects. Moreover, it is important to remember that feminist researchers are no different to any other researcher in that her cultural beliefs have as much chance (as do those of sexist and androcentric researchers) of shaping the results of the analysis. Harding (1986:9) points out that this does not have to mean the researcher spends half of her time 'soul searching'. She says the important distinction is that the researcher:

> appears to us not as an invisible, anonymous voice of authority, but as a real, historical individual with concrete, specific desires and interests.

Although feminist researchers do not claim they have all of the answers concerning methodology, and are not always uniform in their beliefs, it is generally held that traditional interviewing practice creates problems for feminist interviewers. Whilst their primary orientation is towards the validation of women's subjective experiences as women and as people, feminist researchers are also attempting to

expel what Oakley (1981) has termed "textbook recipes" for social science research. These include 'traditional' principles such as interviewing situations where the interviewer uses the subject purely for his/her own purposes and does not answer questions. Where the interviewer regards interviewees as merely data. Furthermore, traditional methods have tended to assume that the researcher has no personal meaning in terms of social interaction in the research process.

Feminist criticism of traditional research methods has also meant feminist methods themselves have been scrutinised. James (1986) points to the inherent power differentials in any research relationship. She says feminist researchers are constantly faced with a major contradiction. That is, whilst being committed to equitable research methods, feminist researchers must also maintain a non-hierarchical relationship with her participants:

> in the final analysis, the researcher controls the research, and it is her definitions which prevail. Furthermore, her social and economic status is often superior to that of the subjects of the research (James, 1986:30).

This has lead to further recognition that feminist methodology does not necessarily hold all of the answers to problems associated with traditional research. Stacey (1988:22) makes the following comment:

> I find myself wondering whether the appearance of greater respect for and equality with research subjects in the ethnographic approach masks a deeper, more dangerous form of exploitation.

She emphasises two contradictions with feminist ethnography. Firstly, because ethnographic research depends upon human relationships it places the participants at grave risk of manipulation by the researcher. Secondly, although the researcher

and her informants work together for a mutual understanding, ultimately the research product is the work of the researcher.

I was also conscious of the style of written material in the final piece of work. Jones (1990:2) makes a critical point about communication when she writes:

> Ironically, many postmodern writers engage the often impenetrable non-reflexive style of mainstream, elitist academic discourse - despite their professed aim of 'opening spaces' for the reader to enter and engage with the text.

The participants of this research expressed the need to be cautious of 'technical' language in the final product as they did not have the benefit of that particular vocabulary. As this study was conducted as much for myself as for other women who shared their similar experiences I felt this was important to keep this in mind at all times.

My reasons for this study

Being taught that subjective experience is an important and valid aspect of social research led me to analyse my own situation. Always fascinated with questions about why people do the things they do, and because I was extensively involved with the social analysis of education, it seemed natural that I should use the knowledge and skills I was learning to analyse my own experience within the school system.

Mine is one of the more unusual cases of a working class girl using the middle class university to 'get ahead'. Right from beginning university I could appreciate my fairly unique situation, since I was the only girl from my third form class that

went straight from school to university (in fact, at all). I never believed the commonly held assumption that university education automatically attracted the 'bright people', because if it did why didn't all the 'bright' girls from my high school go?

This is a very interesting point which is central to the issues of the universities 'high status' and lack of working class participation. I think one major reason why I was not put off going to university was because, although I was scared of the academic side of university and whether I could pass, I was always a bit suspicious about the myth that you had to be super bright to go to university. Besides, my aspirations simply did not include getting a job straight after leaving school. For as long as I can remember I have held the assumption that 'really successful' people go to university, and I suppose I was quite ambitious. However, for my first two years at university I was in constant anguish that I would not get through. This was not always easy because some family members also questioned my ability to participate effectively.

The emotions I experienced at university were those associated with knowing that what I was doing was continually taking me out of my comfort zone; that nice warm place where you feel comfortable with the people around you and with the things that you are required to do. That's why I can understand why so many of the other people from working class backgrounds that I knew (although I could count these on one hand), dropped out part way through their first year.

Being at university was like living in another world. I think this was made slightly easier because I had a few friends from outside school that started university with me. However, generally I felt isolated and I had to deal with the suspicions of family and friends. Sometimes they made me feel like I was betraying them. Sometimes I wondered where I would ever 'fit in'.

Exploring these issues has given me peace of mind and the ability to live and cope with what I see as two very different worlds. Although I still do not find it easy, and although I may have changed in many ways, the people around me generally have not. The difference is that is I understand that I have no right to expect them to.

The participants

The group chosen for study were known to me prior to the research: some were friends and others were acquaintances. As I was known to each of the women I had already established with them a considerable rapport. In fact it was my association with these women that had given me the impetus for this study. As I developed contacts and friendships at university I became more and more interested in 'our' common situation as working class women in the university. The experiences we had to share as a group suggested to me that there was an important set of stories to be told and understood. This allowed me to develop tentative questions concerning the position of working class women at university. I also could assume that each of the participants had a partial view of their place in the world. These factors meant I could utilise an interview schedule as a guide, with the intention of maintaining an atmosphere of broad theorising.

The women were all graduates of New Zealand universities and came from working class backgrounds (see section on class in New Zealand in chapter 3). In their mutual pursuit of university education and qualifications the women demonstrated that they were aware of the benefits of academic credentials. The women came from various types of secondary schools, both Catholic, state, single-

sex and co-ed. They were of various ages, and had graduated within approximately a five year period of each other. Four of the women were Pakeha (one woman's family were British immigrants), one was a Pacific Island woman from Western Samoa, and one was from a Maori family.

Contacting the participants and the interview schedule

I personally approached each woman asking them if they would like to participate in the study. This gave me the opportunity to ascertain each woman's personal class and ethnic background. Satisfied that I had a cross section of ethnicity I could now start interviewing.

The methods utilised in this study are qualitative and involve the accumulation of data through interviews. My concern with the participants in this study was with building a theory of each woman's character, experiences of university, and relationship to socio-economic background and gender structures. My aim was to use the participants' responses as data to theorise about the relationship of class, gender, ethnicity and participation of tertiary education.

I was accustomed to the role of interviewer, and was aware of the importance of language in the process of defining the research interview. I took the stance that the theory would come from (be "grounded" in) what the women told me about their experiences. By doing this I hoped to capture the women's construction of their own reality in a free and uninterrupted environment (Strauss, 1987). In addition, the interviews were recorded on a tape cassette, providing easy and repeated access to the research material.

The interviews were conducted separately, four took place at my home, whilst a further two took place in the participant's homes. The interviews usually lasted for one hour and were conducted over a four week period. After each taped interview the tapes were transcribed, and were later presented back to each participant for verification. Transcribed tapes were then divided into five sub-topics. These included: class/gender, family, university life, schooling and finances.

There were six women in the sample, all graduates of New Zealand universities. Maggie Thomas[1] was a Pakeha woman in her mid-twenties and had a Bsc. The daughter of British immigrants, Tracy Adams was in her mid-twenties and had a B.A. Lisa Chapman was a Pakeha woman who had completed her M.A. the previous year and was in her mid-twenties. Jane Hunt was in her late twenties had a B.Ed and was completing her M.Ed. Jane came from a Maori family. Mary Long was a Pacific Islander, in her mid twenties and had a B.A. Patricia Stevens was Pakeha, in her late twenties and had a B.A. All of the women were working full time at the time of the study, and one of the women was finishing her post-graduate degree on a part-time basis.[2]

Interviewing

The interviews examined the effects of each women's class and ethnicity on her experiences of university education and how she had come to be at university. The interviews did not follow a set of structured questions but largely followed the women's own concerns within the broad focus of the research. After explaining that I was interested in their experience of university as working class women from various cultural backgrounds, my aim was to record the women's conversations about their experiences.

After the taped interviews had been transcribed I colour coded (highlighters were particularly good for this) the transcripts into categories. The categories were not chosen before the interviews because I preferred the themes to emerge from a combination of the women's stories, the research literature and my own experience. Multicoloured codes were incorporated wherever I located crossed themes.

A range of themes/categories emerged, which I coded as follows.

* orange - family: influences of, reactions/attitudes towards university education
* yellow - university life: social aspects of university, relationships with others (university and non-university people).
* purple - knowledge: whose is it, relationship to it.
* pink - schooling: careers advice, influence of peers and teachers, expectations, academic achievement, why university?
* blue - finances: influence on going to university, limitations imposed because of, how finances were approached.
* green - class: reactions to class, other people's (teachers, family, peers, university student counterparts), reactions to going to university;
* red - gender: traditional feminine stereotypes; effect on choice ie. subject, career life path.

I divided these themes into four chapters: schooling; family; university life; finances. As aspects of gender and class intersected with all four major issues above, I incorporated them wherever it was appropriate.

The coding process enabled me to put the major themes together so that larger patterns would emerge. Throughout the coding process I wrote memos as ideas

and questions occurred to me. These provided me with the central areas of concern that were significant to the analysis.

Ethical concerns

The women's accounts were often very personal, relating to things that had happened in their lives and incorporating new emotions about their place in society as women from working class backgrounds. In fact on a number of occasions various women indicated the relief of talking about their experiences as women from working class backgrounds (who had obtained a university education and qualifications). There were ethical problems here: the need to protect the women's privacy meant that names and places were altered. All personal names were changed to protect identities and preserve anonymity.

I had initially thought of gathering the women I had interviewed together for a group discussion of the issues as a way of extending the data, and as a form of consciousness raising. However this plan was dropped as I realised it would have involved us in a much bigger study and one which was beyond my limits. This was regretful in light of the women's enthusiasm to talk about their experiences and hear others' 'stories'.

Conclusion

From my own experiences as a working class girl trying to get to university and then once I was there, I became aware of class differences at university. It saddened me to think that so many other of my high-school peers were not able to

benefit in the same way that I was at university, and it continually surprised me that so many other university students had large groups of previously formed friendships. I was intrigued to listen to lecturers talk about class, ethnic and gender inequality and to read research which affirmed many of my working class experiences of the education system. The motivation for this present research was provoked by the realisation that I (and many of my counterparts) was living in two worlds; one's that didn't mix well and one's which often provided startlingly different life chances. When I stumbled upon Payne's (1980) personal account, I knew there was a story to be told. I would like to briefly share some of the feelings she expressed concerning her experiences as a working class girl in a grammar school because in many ways they reflect my own experience. She writes:

> It was like leading a double life, for neither side would have recognised me in the other context. I was straddling two very different worlds and I felt considerably threatened by the fact that I didn't belong to either...I was always uneasy when people began to parade their status symbols and discuss their father's occupations and where they lived. At school I felt ashamed of my background and attempted to conceal it...At the same time I didn't want my friends in my neighbourhood to know that I was considered clever at school...With my girlfriends the problems associated with school success were class ones and so that I could retain their friendship I disguised my attitude to school....The problem of being seen as clever was particularly acute when it came to having boyfriends...it would be a mistake to be seen as being more clever than a boy (Payne, 1980:17).

The following chapters aim to provide general data on the group of women who participated in this study and to give a more in-depth focus on the ways in which the six women experienced their university education from a class, ethnic and gender perspective. In the analysis I make extensive use of quotations from the interview transcripts. This helps to reflect the women's own thoughts, feelings and emotions.

[1] To protect anonymity the women's names were all replaced with pseudonyms.

[2] See Appendix One for details on the background of each woman.

CHAPTER 5
FAMILY

Research into school outcomes has been largely criticised for neglecting to take into account a number of crucial variables (Connell et al, 1982). Critics argue that the impact of schooling on people's lives is in fact 'deeper, more complex, and more enduring' than we have so far been led to believe. The process of schooling not only helps to establish individual characters it also contributes to the overall nature of a society.

In their book Making The Difference, Connell et al (1982) analyse the link between family circumstances and schooling. In doing so they examine a complex set of social and historical factors which they maintain contribute to the way families regard and interact with their children's schooling. According to Connell et al a family's situation has a lot to do with how it's members experience school. Therefore, in order to understand how the family views school first we must examine the history that exists between the two.

It has been shown that families are shaped by larger social structures; some highly relevant to education. Connell et al argue that in order to understand schools we must understand how family histories are formed. They write:

> It is only by examining personal choice and motive in the context of social relations which enter into them at the most basic level, which are constitutive of individual lives, that we can get any kind of grip on the processes at work (Connell et al, 1982:99).

In order to understand how the family operates we must uncover how it is shaped by class and gender relations. This, in turn, contributes to our understanding of how the school is shaped by class and gender relations. By doing this we can see

that the social dynamics of the family are reflected in the daily encounter of every day classroom life. Moreover, these relationships are based on a capitalist and patriarchal social structure.

Social relationships are reflected in and maintained through social structures such as the school. Thus, while in the family men and women interact in socially constructed ways, the same can be said about the patterns of interaction between men/boys and women/girls in the school. That is, through it's organisation and curriculum, the school constructs and reconstructs gender. As such it can be said that schools are partly involved in the very construction of gender relations.

One would think that achieving academic success would bring with it positive social reward and acknowledgement. However, it must be recognised that students who are high school achievers are separated by their class and gender. Thus even for 'bright' working class students, schooling can often pose difficult situations. To understand this we need to understand the collective experience of working class people in the labour market. In doing so it can be seen that the messages working class people get from the labour market are based (historically) on authority and control. As Connell et al (1982) point out, a lot of working class kids are aware of the tensions created by authority in their parent's working lives. As such, working class kids get a clear message that 'to climb a hierarchy means to break ties and betray loyalties'.

Bourdieu's theory of habitus and cultural capital helps to explain why students of different socio-economic groups have distinctly different experiences within the school system. For example, 'bright' working class students are not necessarily encouraged to study for examinations or to aspire to a university education by their parents, friends, teachers or neighbours. On the other hand, middle class people (bright or not) are encouraged by the people around them to do well at school and

to aspire to a university education. According to Bourdieu, schools subtly reproduce the existing power relations via the dominant culture. The symbolic power of peoples' class habitus, that is their class specific values, norms and tastes, are either validated or invalidated by the dominant culture. Given this theory, it can be seen that the habitus of working class students is not validated by the school, therefore most working class children are not given the 'tools' to understand and utilise the school system in the same way that middle class children are able to. Academic achievement is often not a celebrated characteristic for working class kids, and as such they are not as motivated to aspire to this type of life. In fact, for those few working class kids who do pursue an academic path, life can become very complicated. Brown (1987:82) writes that:

> working class 'swots' may be reminded of their differences from neighbours and other pupils, many of whom they grew up with.

Brown adds that it is a normal fact of life for middle class people to study for examinations, and to take-it-for-granted that they will enter one of the professions.

Undercutting these collective class experiences is gender. So whilst it is true to say that the middle classes have an organic relationship to education, it is incorrect to assume that this relationship is the same for boys and girls. Indeed, quite the opposite. Feminist theorists argue that girls experience education in relation to their subordinate role in society. That is, while middle class girls are more likely than working class people to benefit from the school system and enter one of the professions, their experiences are still largely shaped according to a sexual division of labour. And, as such, middle class girls and women are still likely to remain disadvantaged in relation to their middle class male counterparts.

For academic working class students the notion of furthering one's education is not clear-cut. Brown (1987) suggests that working class students may be unclear about the purpose of pursuing additional 'learning' and particularly, of going to university. School 'success', it will be argued, does not necessarily bring with it the favour and high regard that one would expect such achievement to bring. Indeed, for 'achieving' working class students it can bring more conflict than joy.

Brown (1987) maintains that people use their class culture in different ways to make sense of their social situations. According to Connell et al (1982:78), the family does not form a child's character and then "deliver it ready-packaged to the doorstep of 'the school'". Rather, the family is created and changed by what it's members do.

A school's character is reflected by the types of families in it's area, and the nature of their collective practices. Therefore, families of different class backgrounds do not necessarily use the school in the same way. Moreover, according to Connell et al the relationship between teachers and parents also needs to be understood as a class relationship.

The way parents react to their own schooling has serious consequences for how they view the education of their children, and in turn their children's school experiences and outcomes (Connell et al, 1982). Some parents support education, despite the fact that they did poorly at school. Ironically, however, by supporting education these parents undercut the authority of their own example.

Upper and middle class parents are much more likely to regard teachers as their "paid agents" and to voice their opinions concerning their children's education. On the other hand, working class parents are often alienated from the education system, having no voice and viewing teachers merely as authority figures. For

example, the working class parents in Connell et al's research recalled experiences of alienation and intimidation at school.

School pupils make sense of 'being a student' in many ways; some are 'invisible' within the school, others very visible. In the past, sociologists have concentrated on a narrow group of pupils. Instead, Connell et al (1982:84) argue that:

> The events in which these people are caught up will only make sense if we abandon the habit of thinking about trouble-makers as a kind of irrational, pathological syndrome, that is, as a kind of person, and start thinking of it as a particular relationship, a form of resistance to conventional schooling.

They suggest we need to be careful about how we interpret resistance; that we don't just see it as a struggle between working class and middle class people. Instead, it must be acknowledged that other relations are at work within the school. For example, the assertion of masculinity, in a situation where working class boys bolster their self-esteem by oppressing girls. And resistance by girls which violates conventional expectations of what a 'good girl' should be. Among middle and upper class kids resistance also appears as taking on working class styles, among girls it might mean acting like a boy.

With this in mind I would now like to bring to bear some of the stories that I recorded in discussions with a group of six working class women concerning their decision to go to university and what it was like once they were there.

In a lot of instances, the stories relayed to me by the working class women in this study parallelled those reported in similar studies (Jones, 1986). Although previous studies have not specifically examined the experiences of working class women (or men) who do go to university, they have indicated that a university education is not the common path for the large majority of working class people.

Indeed, education has been shown to hold very different meanings for middle and working classes. Basically, whilst middle class people value education for it's ability to move a person into higher education and/or enter one of the professions, working class people have difficulty seeing the relevance of the academic curriculum for getting a job or even perhaps serving an apprenticeship (although this is by no means guaranteed these days). It is, therefore, hardly surprising that the women I interviewed received mixed and often negative reactions from working class family members concerning their decision to go to university.

At certain times the conflict between parent and child became quite marked. When I asked Maggie what her parents reaction was to her decision to go to university she said:

> MAGGIE: We had fights about it when we were kids because I wanted more than what they had.
> LYNN: What did you used to fight about?
> MAGGIE: Well, varsity was a big bone of contention because they didn't want me to go. They basically wanted me to go out and get a job.

In instances where parents' habitus did not reflect a positive attitude towards university education, they did not endorse their child's decision to go to university. Tracy recalls her mother's reaction to her intention to leave Auckland to go to university in the South Island:

> TRACY: My mother's been telling me to leave school ever since I turned sixteen... Saying, 'why don't you go out and get a job, you don't like school' and...I think she thought I'd fail. She used to ...well it never occurred to me to get a job, but I always remember...because I hated exams...and she always used to say to me, 'this isn't for you, you should just leave and get a job, you can do other things'.

Again we can see a preference for working class parents to want their daughters to get a job rather than get a university education. It is also interesting to note that there were relatively few material constraints impinging on the women's decision to go to university (although these were shown later to affect the women's experiences once at university). Tracy's case was probably highlighted because her mother had seen Tracy's brother start university and then drop out before he had completed his first year. Moreover, she had seen her son 'succeed' without a university qualification. One of the women explained how her parents doubted her decision to go to university, right up until enrolment day:

> MAGGIE: when it actually came round to it they didn't think I would do it.

In looking at the 'peculiar and distinctive' aspects of working class girls' lives, feminist researchers have given us valuable insights into how working class girls make sense of their world, including their perceptions about school and education. These studies have demonstrated a range of responses that girls (and in particular working class girls) have made concerning the role of school in their lives. Whilst the girls in McRobbie's (1978) study rejected what the school had to offer and opted for a traditional feminine role, the girls in Jones's (1986) study accepted what the school had to offer, but ultimately did not have the type of cultural capital needed to carry this through. McRobbie argues that working class girls' material position forces them into a limited experience of women's roles, unlike middle class girls who have the opportunity (due to less material constraints) to have a broader experience, although still sharing a common interest in femininity.

When McRobbie talks about middle class girls having a 'broader experience' she is referring to their increased opportunity to go to university and establish a career. As we have already discussed, the habitus of the middle classes endorses the merit

of education and the prospect of entering one of the professions. So for middle class girls, further education which leads on to a professional career is seen as desirable (although this generally follows a sexual division of labour). Although there has been little research into how Pakeha and Maori working class women respond to school, the research conducted by Jones did highlight a positive response from working class Pacific Island girls towards education. However, I would suggest that few working class girls see school and education in terms of a professional career, simply because the percentages of working class women going to university and entering the professions do not reflect such a trend.

By choosing a university education over traditional roles, the working class women in this study appear to be deviating from the 'normal' experience of working class women. Clearly, the endearing feminine qualities of working class women and girls, seen in the research by McRobbie, do not include the pursuit and acquisition of a university degree. This can be seen in the following comment Maggie makes about her mother's ambition for her daughter:

> MAGGIE: Mum didn't want me to...I mean Mum just wanted me to follow the frilly twin set and pearls ...'the nice woman or the nice girl'.

In other words, Maggie's mother found it difficult, as a working class woman, to associate a vision of a 'nice girl' with her daughter's pursuit of a university degree. That is, by seeking a future which does not (and cannot) include working class values about femininity, the women I interviewed are seen by members of their families to be rejecting the collective wisdom of their class, and their femininity.

Dislocation from their class resulted in feelings of isolation on the part of the women I interviewed. Because Tracy, Maggie and Lisa were not doing what the

working classes consider 'nice' working class girls do, they were sometimes considered pretentious by relatives, and often regarded with suspicion:

> TRACY: I never talked about what I did. I always felt like I was acting superior...They made me feel like I was a bit stuck up. But they like...because my Dad was considered an intellect, because he didn't have a job where he used his hands.

> LISA: they thought we were somewhat strange um...because we did well at school. I think also there was also this feeling that we kind of must be pretentious show off type kids as well, which I don't remember being...like he [grandfather] was always waiting for us to fall on our faces.

> MAGGIE: My parents thought I was a snob. I mean I've been called a snob by every single member of my family at a different stage. But I'm not.

Understanding why family members did not want their relatives to be university educated revealed fears that a university educated person would no longer have anything in common with non-university educated family members; that somehow going to university would mean major alterations in character. Maggie recalls a conversation she had with her mother:

> MAGGIE: Mum sort of came up to me last Christmas and said 'you know, I worried over the years what you'd do, because you've done some things that none of us have done. That we wouldn't be able to talk to each other any more'. But, she said, 'I'm always the one thinking that, and you always manage to surprise me in the fact that when Christmas day rolls round you're always the one sitting there rough as guts and you haven't changed a bit.

Of course by going to university Maggie has indeed changed. In actual fact, in order to get a university education Maggie has had to internalise an entirely different understanding of education than the one held by her parents. That is to say, Maggie's views about education no longer reflect those generally associated

with the working class. And, in securing a university degree Maggie has moved out of the economic category of working class. This has had an enormous effect on Maggie's relationship with her working class mother, because Maggie's mother finds it difficult to relate to what her daughter has become at the socio-economic level, although is clearly able to interact with her on an individual level.

Some women experienced strong support to go to university from close family members. This support seems to be centred around a recognition, on the part of some working class parents, that perhaps a university education would have been desirable had it been available to them. If we cast our attention back to our parents' experiences of schooling perhaps we can answer why.

Schooling and qualifications did not have the same impact on our working class parents' lives as it has had on ours. For our parents it was common to leave school at fifteen, which in fact the majority of the parents of the women in this study did. Almost everyone in this milieu left school at fifteen to enter the labour market, which seemed the most positive step. However as parents, these same people are now taking a different view of school. Contrary to their own short experience of secondary school, these parents now want their children to continue with school as long as they can because they can see how better off (economically) their children will be for it. Unfortunately under high conditions of unemployment, the relationship between the school and the labour market has become more complex and fragile:

> LISA: I think that Mum had a really strong drive for us to have a better education than she had...like she was bright at school and turned fifteen at school and her father made her leave school...and it was it's your fifteenth birthday, you're out, you're earning money for the family.

Members of the home, particularly parents, have been found to have a substantial influence upon decision making by young people about entry into higher education (Hayden & Carpenter, 1990). Intrinsic incentives serve to endorse a person's belief in what they are doing. Hayden and Carpenter make the comment that:

> The extent to which parents provide these incentives and opportunities is likely to be related to their perceptions of the value of higher education (1990:180).

I would suggest that if the people closest to you do not share your value for education then they are going to find it difficult to support your decision to go to university (both emotionally and financially). The prospect of not having the support of one's family may be reason enough for many working class people to decide against university.

Even in the face of failure some of the parents of this study expressed support for their daughters to continue with her university studies. These expressions of support would seem to have been vitally important to the resolve of the new university student. For example, had Tracy not had the emotional support of her father, which served to endorse her decision to get a degree, she probably would have found it much more difficult to rationalise her decision to be at university:

> TRACY: he [Dad] was the one who told me to go back. He sent me a card, he didn't actually tell me, but he sent a card saying 'you can't get much lower than this', after I'd failed.

The Pacific Island woman who participated in this research shared an interesting set of experiences concerning her decision to go to university. Unlike the other women I interviewed, the Pacific Island woman did not experience opposition from members of her family. In fact she explained how important education is to her people, and the high esteem that it is held in:

> MARY: ...for most Pacific Islanders that's their dream, for their kids to go to university. That's what they come here for...the education.

For Mary's parent's, going to university was a celebrated thing to do. Thus, unlike many of the anti-school Pakeha parents, the Pacific Island parents had a different regard for education; one in which (particularly university) education is highly valued. This is implicitly clear in Jones's (1986) study. By placing the same value on education as their daughter, Mary's parents were unanimous in their support for her being at university. Because Mary always knew that her parents approved of her at university, she did not have to question her reasons for going to university:

> MARY: They were the proudest parents there. People would say 'your daughter goes to varsity, what are you doing again, what subjects are you doing?' Whatever it was they enjoyed it, that I went to university.

However, it has been demonstrated that this affiliation for education on the part of Pacific Island people, does not automatically translate into 'success' within the education system (Jones, 1990). This is because being 'successful' at school also requires that a person meet the requirements of the system (having the right cultural capital). Jones points out that the cultural capital of Pacific Island people is largely inconsistent with that demanded by the middle class dominated schools. And generally, this translates into failure for Pacific Island people in the education system, despite the high value placed on education.

In some respects Mary, herself, lacked the cultural capital needed to get her through university. It has long been established that girls and boys receive different messages about themselves through the processes of linguistic interaction

(Mahoney, 1985; Spender & Sarah, 1980). It seems that Mary had also been disadvantaged in the same way and that this process had carried through to university. She told me how she never asked questions in her first year because she felt 'dumb':

> MARY: Like in my first year, I mean I didn't even ask someone to show me how to use the library, how to work it, how to get books out, how to write an essay.

Few peers of the women I interviewed chose to go to university despite many being 'high achievers'. Even fewer stayed long enough in the university system to graduate. Alternatively, some peers ended up at university after a few years in the workforce. I would suggest that very few working class people go to university (despite being qualified to go) because it is a choice not validated by the collective wisdom of their class. Following a course incongruent with one's class origins runs the risk of dislocation from the very people who make up that class. Naturally, the women I interviewed were affected by the collective wisdom of their class. However, by going to university they are seen by others to be dislocating themselves from their class origins, and in effect absorbing somebody else's set of values: in this case those associated with the middle class.

It was clear that the women I interviewed thought a lot about the consequences of their 'uncommon' decision to go to university. However, generally this was an accepted part of the process, and one each woman found she was willing to deal with. For Lisa, the small number of women from her school going to university acted as a motivating force for them all to achieve 'big things'. In fact, Lisa and her peers recognised their class isolation at university and took determined steps to turn this into something positive; forming a kind of group solidarity. She makes the comment that:

> LISA: It was like it was quite surprising because there was always a feeling that um...I don't know...a feeling that...when we got to varsity there were so few women from Avonside [High School] at varsity that it was almost as if it was a point to prove.

Like all of the women, by going to university Lisa had necessarily adopted a middle class attitude about the value of education, which in turn justified her decision to be at university. In doing so, however, she had to reject many of the values endorsed by her working class family.

One woman's decision to go to university clearly mirrors middle class ideals about education. This particular woman indicated that her decision to go was an easy one, based on the collective wisdom of her peer group. Like many middle class people, this woman discussed going to university as a 'natural progression' of school, something she did not question. Although distinctly working class, Tracy's peer group consisted of European emigrants who it would seem had a strong affiliation with the value of education. In fact, she told me the reason why these emigrant families were in New Zealand was directly related to educational issues:

> TRACY: they were emigrant families as such and the reason they came to New Zealand was for education...so that it was expected that they go to university.

The influence of peers has been found to exert a strong influence on a person's decision to go to university:

> In general, the more members of the peer group aspire to proceed to higher education, the greater will be the incentives and opportunities provided by them for a young person to proceed in higher education (Hayden & Carpenter, 1990:180).

One woman's peer group did not endorse education, so much so that she had to go to the extent of hiding the fact that she was going to university from her friends. As she put it:

> MARY: It wasn't cool. It wasn't cool for my image at the time, but I was going to go, but I wasn't telling them.

Obviously this woman's friends did not place the same value on education that she did (it was not considered 'cool'). However, in order to maintain an affiliation with her peer group Mary felt it necessary to omit this information from her friends. Although none of the woman's friends went to university, she did recall some of the other girls from her school going. It is also interesting to note, that although Mary had decided to get a university degree she did not associate herself with the type of girls that she considered went to university:

> LYNN: So how many of your high school friends went to varsity?
> MARY: Only probably about...oh there was a few, but they weren't my friends, they were bright girls. I hung around with the stupid people (giggles). Not the 'varsity type'.

This affiliation with higher education did not necessary result in the completion of a university degree. When I asked Jane what happened to the friends that she had started university with, she told me that most of them had dropped out along the way. I asked her why?

> JANE: A lot of them dropped out because it just wasn't for them or they failed or they went overseas.

Jane's counterparts who left without completing university may have found it too difficult to rationalise their pursuit of a university education and therefore decided to leave and get involved with something which held more meaning for them.

The diverse nature of the feelings these women and their families had to deal with did not, however, automatically disappear on the day of graduation. On the contrary, upon graduation and entering their first professional jobs the women could do nothing but endorse their decision to go to university because it had clearly delivered to them what they had wanted all along; a professional career. As a consequence, their views about the value of education would have been finally sealed, signalling in many respects, a strong departure from their working class-ness. Because family members' views (particularly parents) had not changed in the same way, an even larger class gap could be said to appear between the two. This can be seen in the following statements:

> PATRICIA: Like I know my parents were really proud when I graduated, but I still sometimes get the feeling that they would rather I had done something ordinary. You know.

I would suggest that because working class people are so isolated from things 'university' that they find it hard to understand and therefore support what their children are attempting to do. This understanding (or lack of) extends back to the day-to-day workings of the university system, and highlights the isolation of working class people from the most 'valued knowledge'. This was made apparent when I asked one of the women if her parents knew what she was doing at university?

> TRACY: No, neither of my parents did. They didn't understand it because I wasn't...I used to explain to them what I do, and they used to latch onto things, like they knew I did a Maori paper. But like they'd latch onto bits and pieces, but they couldn't understand the structure of my degree, and so I suppose that's why I always thought that you went to varsity...you always worked to be a lawyer or an accountant. They didn't actually understand what a B.A was.

> PATRICIA: It was almost as if Mum did not want to know what I was doing at varsity. She never asked me much and I suppose I regarded this as a signal that she wasn't wholly approving.

It would seem that working class parents' lack of understanding about the structure and process of university education serves to confuse working class students and threaten the whole possibility of a university education. Therefore, I would argue that people who have had experience of the university system (middle and upper classes) have an advantage over those who do not (working class). They also have a vested interest in maintaining the 'apparent' secrecy surrounding university education, so as to keep it for themselves and their children. What is more, working class students are doubly disadvantaged because they have to contend with the often negative attitudes of their family and peers.

Without a doubt, the impact of the family on a person's decision to go to university is powerful, and cannot therefore be ignored. In this chapter I have argued that the reasons behind participation at university are tied in with class and gender. Using Bourdieu's theories of habitus and cultural capital it has been shown that those belonging to the dominant group in society have the type of cultural capital which is recognised by the university. This has been shown to give this group a vast advantage over those whose cultural capital does not reflect that of the university. The fact, therefore, that there are greater numbers of middle class students at New Zealand universities is not a matter of their extra academic ability, but rather due to their good fortune; that is, being born into the 'right' family.

CHAPTER 6
SCHOOLING

Wolpe (1988) has criticised past accounts for ignoring the effect of family organisation on all women's lives, irrespective of class membership. Although it has been recognised that women's roles are important to the reproduction of each new generation, she criticises the assumption that women do this naturally and without question. Wolpe argues that the nuclear family is in fact the major site of women's oppression.

Most 'nuclear' families can be characterised by their traditional sexual division of labour. According to many feminist researchers this division of tasks is central to the reproductive strategies of families and women's oppression (Barrett, 1980). In New Zealand both Middleton (1988) and Jones (1988) have shown that the class, race and gender dynamics of families help to structure and nurture the future possibilities and expectations of girls and women. Barrett (1980:158) comments that:

> ...family responsibilities play a direct role in the structure of women's wage labour and in setting limits on women's participation.

The fact that the family appears to operate independently serves to reinforce the legitimacy of gender roles. These are necessarily supported by a set of ideologies which serve to legitimate the distinctions between men and women.

So far I have argued that educational decisions and experiences are negotiated through the organisational processes of race, class and gender within the family. In this chapter I shall go one step further and demonstrate how schools contribute

to this process. In doing so it must be remembered that the educational choices, experiences and responses that students make in regard to their schooling are also made according to the gender relations experienced within class located families.

Schools contribute to the maintenance of the status quo by operating at two levels: at the level of ideology and by providing practical training in gender roles. The ideology of family life is incorporated, indirectly, into the school curriculum where it becomes meshed in the hidden curriculum of such things as textbooks, and underlies teacher responses to pupils. The idea of the family is maintained by a set of ideologies which are transmitted from one generation to the next. One way in which this ideology is perpetuated is through the cultural construction of gendered identities. That is, being female and feminine or male and masculine involves a prescribed form of behaviour which clearly signals the gender of the individual.

Schools help produce and reproduce the inequalities found in the family and at work by incorporating the ideology of the family into subjects taught, such as home economics. Subject specialisation is merely an extension of the division of labour in the family and workforce. Education contributes to the transformation of the traditional form of gender division of labour by giving all girls training in domestic skills at the lower end of secondary schooling. However, as students progress through the school a class separation emerges, whereby middle class girls are less likely to take so called 'soft' subjects like home economics. This is because home economics is regarded as an easy option; failing to fall into the category of an academic subject necessary for the entry into higher education. This pattern of subject specialisation is concentrated on a very limited range of subjects and has severe implications for the types of further education and occupations that girls will be eligible to enter. Placing girls into 'female' subjects early on runs the very real risk of foreclosing later options. Ryan (1985) suggests that education is

powerless by itself to achieve equality between the sexes because it merely responds to changes in broader structures rather than causes them. She writes that:

> Struggle for a more equitable society certainly does occur in schools, but ultimately the very organisation of family and work, and the relations of class, sex and race which structure these, must be changed (Ryan, 1985:135).

Working class women and schooling

Feminist ethnographies into the lives of women and girls have highlighted the diverse experiences of girls in schools. Essentially it is understood that girls' experiences of school are shaped according to their class and ethnic location, as well as by their gender. These different experiences help transmit to women and girls ways of living in a society structured upon both capitalism and patriarchy.

The interview material suggests that the decision to go to university created conflict and contradictions in the lives of the working class women. Using Bourdieu's theories of habitus and cultural capital to highlight the impact of family on decision making, I will explain why so few working class people (in particular women) become university educated.

Middle class students capture a greater proportion of the academic achievements dished out by schools, and therefore are more likely to be qualified to attend university. Although many working class students secure the right to go to university, only a small percentage take up that opportunity. The working class women in this study are among that small minority who have been to university. However, their mutual decision to go to university did not mean that everything went smoothly. On the contrary, by going to university these working class

women had to cope with much conflict and many contradictions. Why then, did they go; what were their motivations; how did they cope once there; and in what way(s) (if any) were they distinctive from the other students?

Reasons for going to university

Rather than risk the social embarrassment of being 'shown up' at university, working class people prefer to forget about higher education and concentrate on obtaining an alternative set of prizes; ones that are defined as prestigious to the working classes. Research into the reasons why working class people do not go to university suggests that they do not see any benefit from at least three more years of study at university when they could be earning money in a job (Lauder et al, 1992). These motivations form what Bourdieu has termed the habitus of the working class, and may represent for example, what Willis (1977) found to be the valuing of manual over mental work as a form of celebrated masculinity.

According to Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), it is the dominant group whose culture is embodied in the schools. The habitus of the middle classes reflects that which is endorsed by the school. Schools take the cultural capital of the dominant groups as the natural, and only appropriate, type of capital, and treat all children as if they have equal access to it. Therefore, middle class childrens' decision to go to university is not a conscious one, but more an accepted norm in their lives (Hughes & Lauder, 1988; Lauder et al, 1992). On the other hand, working class students do not automatically consider going to university. In fact, quite the opposite. Because the habitus of the working classes does not reflect that endorsed by the education system, they are less likely to be attracted to what the university has to

offer. Why then did this group of working class women make the decision to go to university when the vast majority of their working class counterparts did not?

It is my argument that the working class women in this study made the decision to go to university because they had, to a large extent, disregarded the collective wisdom of their working class background and internalised middle class values about education. In doing so, they had acquired the type of habitus endorsed by the education system and the type of 'knowledge' which the school system recognises and rewards. As well as being able to obtain what the school offered, the women saw the relevance of further education in their lives. This can be seen in some of the following comments:

> MAGGIE: It was always my plan. You know, my big plan in life...I never once remember thinking to myself, what am I going to do when I leave school, because to me it wasn't an issue...I wasn't going to leave school.

> LISA: I can't remember that I wouldn't go. I don't ever remember thinking you know...like being a third or fourth former and sort of thinking I might be a nurse. In fact I never thought of doing anything kind of ordinary, and I probably didn't know that I would go to varsity, but I remember saying, I used to tell everybody that I was going to be the prime minister, so I think I probably knew then that I would definitely go to varsity.

> LYNN: So you went to university because your other friends did?
> TRACY: Oh, and also because, I suppose that's just what you did...like I never thought of leaving school and getting a job. I didn't know what I was going to do. I had no idea, but what you did was you went to university, and I'd always achieved academically...like it was just expected.
> LYNN: Why did you go to university?
> MARY: Because I wanted to.
> LYNN: From what age?.
> MARY: ...I suppose from the time I started high school. Only because it was drummed into us as kids.

Unlike the vast majority of working class students, the women in this study did not question what they were going to do upon leaving school; they were always going to go to university. Their habitus, particularly the value they placed on education, is therefore more like that of their middle class counterparts.

Like Patricia, Maggie's way of thinking about education and her future place in society led her to take quite a ruthless approach to education. That is, she primarily evaluated education in terms of its ability to secure her a more comfortable future financial situation than the one her parents had and were experiencing:

> MAGGIE: People say that you don't go to varsity for money...Well I did. I went for money. I went because I knew that if I didn't go to varsity then I wouldn't be able to get the sort of job that pays me enough to get things I want. I knew the only way I could move up was through education, That's the only way. That's the only way that I can think of now.

> PATRICIA: Because...I don't know how, but I knew I wouldn't get a well paid job if I didn't have a university degree. Besides, I liked school and enjoyed learning, and I liked university people. I wanted to be part of that.

Jane was also motivated by the financial reward she was told she would get if she completed a university degree:

> JANE; Well, cos I went to teachers college it [university] was an option at teachers college. And the incentive was that you got more money when you had a degree. But it's not much...that's not the real incentive.

Tracy attributed her desire to go to university to peer group influence. Although distinctly working class in an economic sense, the few students Tracy was friends with all came from emigrant families who attached middle class values to

education, regarding university education as both desirable and attainable. Therefore, Tracy's decision to go to university was more like the type of decision making which Hughes and Lauder (1988) and Lauder et al (1992) refer to as non-decision making. That is, where people merely follow the tacit collective wisdom of their group:

> TRACY: I suppose [I went to university] because all my peer group went to university. All the people I went to school with...there were very few of us...

At university

Society is structured so as to reward and value the habitus of the dominant class, whilst (falsely) maintaining an air of fairness for all. A relation between schooling and habitus is established when it is understood that as far as the school is concerned some habitus constitutes cultural capital, while others do not. In this case, the habitus of the dominant class constitutes the cultural capital recognised by the school system. The same relationship operates in regard to higher education, and can be seen in the following comment Maggie makes concerning her perception of 'her place' at university:

> MAGGIE: I think I was intimidated by my class. I've always been very conscious of my position in society. Like I was conscious that I didn't have the nice clothes and speak the right way. So the clothes and the voice, the 'right voice'. I believe that our voices changed since we've been to varsity.

Bourdieu notes that even when people acquire enough cultural capital to achieve academically, they often fail to acquire the 'style' of the dominant class (Harker, 1984b). This was evident in many of the comments made by the women I interviewed.

For Maggie, differences in class characteristics were a constant source of anguish, particularly when she first started university, as this was the first time she had been truly thrust into a middle class environment. As a working class woman entering a middle class university for the first time, Maggie's habitus was not wholly consistent with that endorsed by the university, and therefore she found it difficult to 'fit in'.

Being brought up in a working class home is difficult when one is constantly barraged with middle class ideals about life. It can place pressure on families and individuals who are not middle class to follow a 'foreign' set of values, and serves to confuse and diminish working class experiences and meanings. For Maggie this process translated into feelings of shame about her material surroundings. It was clear from our interview that Maggie had begun to interpret personal well-being with how well her family's circumstances equated in terms of middle class ideals:

> MAGGIE: I think I was a dreamer in the fact that I always dreamt of having a beautiful house and having beautiful clothes, driving a nice car...eating at restaurants and silly things like that, which I probably daydreamed about heaps.

It is also interesting to note that in the comment Maggie makes above, she talks about acquiring a different way of speaking at university ('I believe that our voices changed since we've been to varsity'). In this instance, Maggie appears to be doing what Bourdieu says is necessary for a person from a non-dominant background to 'succeed' through the education system. That is, acquiring the appropriate cultural capital. In addition, Maggie is seen, in her comment, to have developed the type of 'style' of the dominant class. Bourdieu maintains that, inevitably, this has consequences for the person's habitus.

Members of the dominant group are at a considerable advantage because when they arrive at university they already have the 'appropriate' cultural capital from their families and school. People from working class backgrounds and minority groups must abandon their habitus, and internalise the dominant group's in order to 'succeed' at university. This may also give the impression that growing up in a working class home is somehow a disadvantage.

The overall picture Maggie had of university students was so different to the way she saw herself that she felt she had to hide her social origins. Moreover, Maggie learned to associate her social development and academic ability as a working class woman in a negative or lesser way. She explained to me that:

> MAGGIE: ...they seemed so much more sophisticated, the rich kids or should I say the middle class kids. And I didn't really want anyone to know where I came from...you know...which is so...that's been such a thing during the whole of my life.

Similarly, Lisa could remember how different she felt in comparison to the group of people she was introduced to at university. She suggested that acquiring the 'valued' knowledge (that possessed by the dominant group) was not merely a question of mastery, but more an issue of 'style':

> LISA: ...like there was a really strong class thing, definitely...they seemed so old and so worldly wise, kind of um...maybe the difference between somebody going to Oxford University or something like that and um...you know a regular...
> LYNN: And did you really think they were different?.
> LISA: Absolutely, oh they were, there's no question about it. Um...they'd lived overseas, their parents were wealthy, they'd travelled a lot, a lot, a lot.

One of the women goes as far as referring to the people in her new surrounds of the university as 'alien':

> LISA: ...the people were just a whole, like almost alien from my background...really quite different.

Families equip children with expectations about their future, with criteria by which to judge success and failure, and a particular disposition toward the values which dominate the school. However, because the school's culture is that of the dominant group, anyone not from this class is disadvantaged. If a child does not get the necessary information from it's family to 'succeed' at school then she/he must rely on the school for that information. This causes discontinuity between the family and school for people whose families are not part of the dominant group, because the consequences of succeeding in such a system (if you are working class, Maori, or from the Pacific Islands), is that you must give up the cultural knowledge of your family background in order to internalise that of the dominant group. To members of families whose daughters are going to university, having one's daughter internalise a new set of meanings may be seen as a personal affront to their values.

When working class parents communicate to their children that they are better off getting a job than going to university, they are unwittingly sending their children messages that they have no right to be part of the university. Working class children also get the message that they must somehow be different or deficient from those who are 'meant' to go to university, and certainly this also means they are not capable of succeeding at university.

Lisa had a predominantly positive view of her scholastic capabilities and this meant that she generally felt capable of entering university:

> LISA: It was just like a natural progression you did if you were kind of smart.

However, for Lisa this was not simply a matter of unquestioningly accepting her academic ability. Before she could go to university, Lisa first had to be reassured that she was capable of coping at university. I would suggest that like Maggie and Patricia, Lisa had developed over a period of time a devalued opinion about the calibre of her abilities in relation to success at university, which caused her to question her ability to obtain a university degree. This is hardly surprising given that her middle class boyfriend and his peer group also regarded her knowledge as inferior:

> LISA: ...I don't think it was ever intentional but there was this kind of...um...kind of...they used to hassle me about them being smarter...it's like he really didn't think I was able to cope with that...

Lisa found that her scholastic ability was questioned on the mere basis that she had not attended a 'good' school. She recalls how her boyfriend didn't think she would be able to cope at university because she had gone to 'Avonside' (not a middle class school). Therefore he assumed that his knowledge was superior. However, it is impossible to separate out the extent to which his feelings of superiority were based on gender or class. Whichever is the case, this belief would have been strongly supported by the fact that so few girls from her school went to university. In fact, it seems as if everyone was convinced that this particular school just wasn't 'meant' to produce academic pupils. To a large extent therefore, the women had begun to agree with this assumption. This can be heard in a statement Lisa makes about the high school she attended:

> LISA: Like Avonside...when I was in my seventh form year, I was the only student that did scholarship, that sat the scholarship exams because people sort of didn't...it wasn't an academic school. So I think they thought, well she's a nice girl, but she's not very bright.

Through her association with people from the middle classes, Lisa did come to realise that her school did not offer the same set of opportunities:

> LISA: When I was in the sixth form we didn't have a computer in the school and I used to go across to B's school, and like he had the keys to the computer room...and there were just masses...and we didn't even have one Apple, and I thought this was a real injustice.

This also led Lisa to question the quality of secondary schooling that she had received:

> LISA: I think there was some kind of feeling that the education that I had pre-tertiary was inadequate to prepare me for varsity...I felt a bit cross about that.

It would appear that the significance of others either helped or hindered the working class womens' self confidence. By questioning their ability to compete and 'succeed' at university (which school is 'supposed' to prepare all students for) other people are sending out clear messages that they did not think that the working class women were capable. All of the women participating in this study experienced doubt from someone close to them. From parents:

> MAGGIE: ...that's why Mum and Dad were absolutely shocked to the core. My Dad rang me three times and he couldn't believe it when I passed. They thought I might be lucky to pass one or two, and that's really honestly how they thought.

To boyfriends:

> LISA: I remember when I enroled at varsity. I enroled for forty-eight points and he said 'don't you think you're committing yourself to a bit much'. You know, he was doing forty-eight points but he said 'don't you think you should perhaps start with forty-two or thirty-six!

To peers:

> LYNN: Where did you get the idea that you weren't bright enough from?.
> LISA: Um...I think, um...I was going out with a guy from Boy's High and I saw a lot of him and his friends and they were super super bright. I mean they were like um...I mean they got scholarships at high school and stuff, you know...they were really clever and um...I don't think it was ever intentional but there was this kind of um...kind of...they used to hassle me about them being smarter.

To teachers:

> LYNN: What did your friends think of you going to teachers college?.
> JANE: Well good, I think. I think the teachers were more surprised.

The effect of having close friends and relations question their ability was that the women began to question it too. The feeling of being 'lesser' academically was obviously a very real emotion experienced by the working class women participating in this study, and was more likely to be strongest at the commencement of university study.

People's family lives generally remain the same generation after generation. However, old traditions start to be chipped away once new events and circumstances begin to take over. In the case of Lisa and Patricia, having a family member already at university not only helped their knowledge of university life, it made their entry into university easier because they had older siblings who had already 'made the first move':

> LISA: ...I can remember, me and her [sister] were very close and she used to drag me along to parties and stuff when I was quite young, which was a big deal...

> ...Once we go to varsity we never went to the orientations, we went to all of the orientations before we got to be students and then we were 'too cool' to go. And so I'd gone to quite a lot of varsity type things and met varsity type people...

In some ways family attitudes improved once they began to acknowledge the benefits accrued through university training:

> PATRICIA: At first it was hard for Mum and Dad because I don't think they thought that I'd pass...that I was wasting my time at varsity. But once my brother graduated and I was nearly finished, their attitudes were a little more relaxed. In fact, I can remember they asked me once, 'so you're glad you went to university?'. I always found it incredibly difficult to express how glad I was, without sounding elitist.

However, in general the working class women involved in this study were still left feeling as if they were in a type of class limbo. That is, whilst they had changed in many ways throughout their time at university, those around them, particularly family members, had not. Therefore, in some ways a larger class gap emerged between parent and child by the time the women were finished at university and ready to begin their careers.

Careers advice and school staff

According to Russell (1986) two processes operate in the classroom and school which lead students to accept and reproduce a society based on a hierarchy of class and gender divisions. Firstly, school personnel recognise sex and class as social categories to be considered in guiding students in making 'appropriate' future occupational and educational plans. And secondly, the school is said to lead individuals to accept and reproduce a patriarchal and capitalist society through the

school personnels' implicit devaluation of cultures other than those of the ruling class.

When examining the influence of school personnel and career guidance staff it is important to recognise that, they too, bring gendered and class experiences and assumptions (to social situations). Therefore to a large extent, their experiences will inevitably effect the way they interpret the world and the social and professional situations that they encounter.

Unlike their male counterparts, women are expected to put the family first. In addition, despite the fact that some working class girls may achieve academic success at school, they are substantially less likely, compared to their middle class counterparts, to benefit from the rewards of higher education. According to Russell (1986), this disadvantage is manifested in the way that school personnel and careers advisers cater for students.

School personnel have been said to implicitly devalue cultures other than those of the ruling or middle class. This is most usually expressed by school personnel refusing to recognise resistant or opposing cultures. Thus, the school ends up actively promoting the preservation of the hierarchical status quo. Simply by avoiding issues, Russell says schools support existing gender and class hierarchies.

School personnel actively contribute to the maintenance of class and gender divisions of labour through the advice they give. Russell's content analysis of comments made about students indicated that counsellors knew as much about student family background as they did about academic achievement. She argues that students are less likely to be led to consider future work which would be inconsistent with their social class background or gender, regardless of any school academic achievement. This arrangement serves the requirements of capital

because, as a reserve army of labour, women are able to be pulled into the workforce when needed and pushed out, back to the family, during times of economic recession.

Griffin (1985) suggests that the form and content of careers advice varies considerably from school to school, and depends on the available resources, enthusiasm, and training of each careers teacher. Her research into class and race differences from school to the job market demonstrated how students' job decisions were often affected by the personal class/racist and sexist expectations of teachers and careers staff. Pressures to be 'realistic' and move into appropriate jobs were found to take different forms according to the girls' class and race. For example, white teachers and careers officers often perceived Asian students as 'very quiet', with language difficulties, and unrealistic in 'aiming too high'. Afro-Caribbean students tended to be seen as 'trouble-makers' or 'layabouts', who were destined for menial factory jobs. Asian students were frequently labelled as 'over-aspirers', and Afro-Caribbean students as 'underachievers'. However, a report looking at the 'under-achievement' of Afro-Caribbean students concluded that it was in fact teachers' low expectations of black students, combined with personal and institutional racism that were the main causes of these students' poor school performance. Moreover, the same report pointed out that the 'unrealistic ambitions' of Asian students were likely to be applauded in white middle class students.

In her in-depth analysis of the beliefs of nineteen guidance counsellors Russell (1986) noted that not one of the guidance counsellors assumed students aspired to break out of their social class backgrounds. The beliefs of school counsellors were found to be vastly inconsistent with those of the students. In fact, whilst one working class girl stated aspirations to go to university and study sciences, guidance counsellors were of the belief and supported the notion that this student

was planning to be a legal secretary. This was contrary to the wishes of the working class girl who explicitly stated several times in her interview that she did not want to be a legal secretary.

In some cases, counsellors have been found to reinforce decisions made by students whose academic achievement was inconsistent with what might be anticipated for their future work. Russell found that when the highest achieving student of her sample of forty, (which happened to be a working class girl), decided to become a hospital technician rather than follow her original intention of becoming a doctor, the school guidance counsellor saw this as a valid decision due to the student's lack of financial backing. This example highlights the predisposition of working class students to jobs which maintain their social class, and highlights the lack of positive encouragement, and occurrence of sometimes active discouragement from the school, to alter the status quo.

Russell's research confirmed gender was much more explicitly used than class when advising students, particularly girls. Thus, whilst maintaining the social class background was seen as appropriate, for the most part maintaining the sexual division of labour took precedence.

Russell explained that one way counsellors sidestepped issues of class was by converting social hierarchies into academic hierarchies. Thus, in the minds of counsellors upper and middle class students are translated into 'bright' students, whereas working class students are 'dull'. Moreover, she found that student class origin affected the interpretation of falling grades by school personnel. Thus, low achieving middle class students were labelled 'bright' but lacking in motivation, whilst working class students with falling grades did not present problems to school counsellors as they were seen to be achieving according to what was expected of them.

Griffin (1985) found that differences between women's and men's work were reflected in careers lessons. This process was found to be the same for working class girls leaving school to join the work force, and for middle class girls going to university.

The women in this study all experienced some form of careers advice whilst at school. Generally it was expressed that the careers advice received was of limited use, and not seen as relevant to university study. In fact, careers advice was primarily directed at the labour market. This would suggest that the careers advice received by the women in this study was generally directed toward their entering the labour market, and not the university. Thus for girls who had already made up their minds to go to university, careers advice was not seen to be particularly relevant:

> LYNN: Did you have career's advice at school?"
> MAGGIE: "No, because I never went, because I wasn't happy getting a career.
>
> LISA: I probably didn't really listen to anyone except for the varsity people that came out.

For the women of this study the primary focus of careers advice was directed at getting girls into jobs. This rationale was of little help to one working class woman who had aspirations of going to university. The woman I am referring to experienced difficulty getting information about university from her school and remembers the unhelpful attitude of staff. This unhelpful attitude is at least one way in which staff unconsciously tell students that they are not 'university material':

> PATRICIA: Information about university was scarce, and I was not that confident about asking questions because I was not considered 'bright' at school. I thought they would tell me I was not suitable, so I generally kept it to myself. Although when I was asked what I was going to do by certain teachers I sort of got the feeling that they thought I was aiming too high...you know. In fact, I remember my first day at varsity, I ran into two of the teachers from my school and they asked me what I was doing. When I told them their reaction was more negative than positive because they questioned my ability to cope with the minimum requirements of a first year course.

Essentially, in order to get what they wanted, (a university degree) the women had to disregard the habitus of their basic socialisation and adopt the type recognised by the education structure. This process has the effect of devaluing everything which is not associated with that of the dominant group in society. Moreover, because these standards are (falsely) recognised as equal, the fact that people do not reach them is seen as a matter of individual lack of ability or talent. As long as this myth is upheld and remains unquestioned people belonging to groups other than the dominant will continue to remain disadvantaged in respect of education.

CHAPTER 7
UNIVERSITY LIFE

In the previous chapters I used Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and cultural capital to explain how it is the dominant group whose culture is embodied in schools. In this chapter I shall describe how a system of unequal power is maintained, and partly recreated through the 'transmission' of culture.

The fact that people comply with society's principles is part of the reason why social and ideological stability is maintained (MacDonald, 1977). In addition a number of other factors operate together to legitimise the process of domination. These include access to power and the opportunity to legitimise certain dominant categories. Young (1971) maintains that these principles are not neutral but interconnected with economic and political stratification.

Schools process both knowledge and people. According to Bourdieu, education cannot provide equality as long as the curriculum and the methods it uses are derived from the culture of the dominant group. Currently the curriculum largely represents the experiences and needs of the dominant group.

According to Bourdieu the cultural capital produced in schools serves to organise students into a social hierarchy. Schools take the cultural capital of the middle class as natural (and desirable) and use it as if all kids have the same access to it. According to Dale (1976:33) the implication is that:

> by taking all children as equal, while implicitly favouring those who have already acquired the linguistic and social competencies to handle middle class culture, schools take as natural what is essentially a social gift, ie. cultural capital.

In order to analyse the political nature of the curriculum we need to understand the nature of the relationship between the various contents of the curriculum. Bernstein (1979) refers to this as classification. He maintains that where classification is strong then the various subjects are well insulated from one another, with clear boundaries. Bernstein calls this a collection code. Under this system the more bits you collect (the more you pass), the more educated you are. Where classification is weak then the insulation is broken down and the boundaries are blurred. Bernstein calls this a integrated code.

Bourdieu maintains that knowledge codes have clear relationships to cultural and social contexts. Each code has different implications for the power and authority structure of the educational process. The consequences of one code may not be characteristic of the cultural backgrounds of all pupils, and, in fact, may represent the value system of the dominant social and ethnic faction. The collection code is most suited to a hierarchically organised socio-economic system where division of labour is marked. Harker (1990:39) suggests the implications of this is that:

> while we have a curriculum organised around the knowledge code of one of the groups constituting a mixed society, we will always have educational inequalities attributable to social and ethnic origin, since only the children of the dominant group will have acquired the cultural capital with which to exploit the possibilities inherent in the schools.

Thus, the education system remains the 'property' of the dominant groups because they have the power to dictate what schools deem valid. Just as each new generation learns to mirror the class specific values, tastes and norms (habitus) exhibited by other family members, the cultural capital required by the school reflects the habitus of the middle classes.

Conversations with the working class women about the 'types' of students at university indicated that the dominant group were clearly in control of reproducing the type of habitus recognised by the university. This is inferred in the following comment Lisa makes:

> LISA: there's that feeling of old boy's network and oh certainly that was quite big...yeah, and I remember Girls High girls really looking down on us in a big way...I can remember girls from private schools, you know Girls High was a step down, but Avonside, well now...'so you're the only girl from your school that's at university are you'.

Knowledge codes are structured in a certain way, so as to give those from the dominant group an advantage. Bernstein argues that in addition to the contents of the curriculum there are two other aspects of schooling which reflect the knowledge code of a culture. They include: pedagogy (the way knowledge is transmitted), and evaluation (the testing procedures). So, in fact, there are three 'message systems' which reflect the knowledge code of the dominant culture.

A student's ability is evaluated in terms of the criteria set by the dominant group in society (Bernstein, 1979). That criteria, or in this case the curriculum which constitutes what is taught in schools, is organised around the knowledge code of the dominant group. Thus, only those with the dominant cultural capital will be able to recognise and therefore understand this type of knowledge. In order to succeed in such a situation, those not belonging to the dominant group are lead to question their knowledge and to see it in a lesser way. Indeed, this process makes it possible to mask the inequalities in the system because people associate 'failure' to meet prescribed standards with individual lack of ability and motivation. Some of the women participating in this study expressed the opinion that their education had not been of the same standard as that experienced by students who had been to the 'more exclusive' schools. This distinction inferred that the working class women's

education was inferior. In turn, this made some of the women apprehensive about 'competing' with students who 'had the knowledge':

> LISA: I think when I started the girls from Girl's High had an academic edge over me...I felt that because I'd been in the top class all throughout school and so I felt like I should of had better teaching...better preparation for varsity...
>
> ...they seemed to have or seemed to be better read, have broader general knowledge, you know...like just in...conversationally were really clued up...and um I can remember kind of thinking I don't know if I can compete with these people academically. They just seemed to be smarter...and I probably felt like...that it seemed it was a combination of my home background, and you know their parents were top dentists, lawyers and teachers, and you know university people, and so they got that kind of mental stimulation at home that I didn't have.

Generally the university is regarded as prestigious and held in high esteem. Knowledge, particularly the abstract kind, is regarded as a valued prize, and is monopolised by the middle classes. Because school achievement is seen as a matter of skill and not due to class identity (and luck), entry into university is regarded as a consequence of academic excellence and something which 'bright' people do. However, because those from the middle classes have an advantage over other groups it is hardly surprising that working class people and those from ethnic minorities (whose habitus does not reflect that of the school) do not think they have the ability to go to university, when we are led to believe that 'failure' within the school system is the direct result of lack of ability or talent. A couple of the women explain this phenomenon in the following passages:

> MAGGIE: I thought it [university] was this place where you did nothing but study and you had to be incredibly bright, and you had to get like...I mean they gave you all of these stupid figures at school, like you have to be at least a B plus average student to really qualify for going to varsity, which is crap. But they tell you these things, and you think...well, I'm not a B plus average.

PATRICIA: I can remember being so relieved when I passed some of my first year papers. Like even though I didn't pass them all I could see that you didn't have to be super bright. I felt much better after that. And you know what's really interesting is that now when I meet old school friends who were in the same classes as me...probably did better than me sometimes...they say to me 'you must be really bright to do that' [be at university]. And I try to explain to them that I'm not...you know...just average. But they won't have it.

In spite of being high achievers at school, the working class women did not appear to have much confidence regarding their ability to cope with the academic standards required with university study:

MAGGIE: I didn't think I'd get through my first year at all. That's why it was such a goddam shock when I did.

LISA: ...I got really worried that I wouldn't be clever enough to pass at varsity.

The participants of this study recognised that middle class students had a different 'style' (or habitus), which they in turn rationalised as better or more knowledgeable than their own. Lisa believed the nature of her secondary education was inferior to that of many of the people she got to know at university. In the following comment, one gets an idea of the 'type' of education received by some middle class boys:

LISA: Like they were arts students so they'd done years and years of classics and um...Greek language...art history, and papers like that...just their general knowledge was phenomenal, just incredible, and they'd read a lot...it was a really big part of their culture. It was like being up till three in the morning reading poets, and um...philosophers and that kind of thing, which was completely nothing like my sort of background. They were very worldly wise and they were kind of amazing to be around.

The following comment made by Lisa highlights the head start which boys from the dominant group have. Unlike them, at first Lisa had to familiarise herself with a 'foreign' habitus and develop the type of cultural capital recognised by the university:

> LISA: ...it was really interesting the difference between me coming in and the guys that I was friends with. Like their grades started...they got all A's, some of them got all A pluses...they were just so smart, and it wasn't until...um...in my first year I got all C pluses and B minuses, and by the time we got to the third year and post-grad my grades had all caught up, and it was like, god you bastards you're not smarter than me at all.

Lisa's realisation that her friends were not brighter than her led her to question why they should think this way. That is, Lisa began to recognise that 'doing well' at university was more a matter of knowing how to go about it the right way (having the appropriate cultural capital), and not necessarily being smarter than anyone else:

> LISA: It's just like they knew all of the tricks, they really did, they were shrewd, they knew the system already.
> LYNN: How did that make you feel?
> LISA: Well probably at the end of my first year I hadn't worked that out yet and so I thought that basically I was above average intelligence but not really clever and I just thought they were really super bright people...

Class relations at university

University is not just lectures and examinations. In fact, alongside the academic aspect of university is the social scene. I would argue that the social environment of the university is a very important aspect in the lives of university students, particularly for students who must travel away from home and, of course because

of the young age group of the majority of first year students. A student who gets involved in the 'culture of university life' is likely to have a different experience of university than the student who only participates in university lectures.

The university institution is middle class and as such is made up of predominantly middle and upper class people. Evidence from my research suggests that school background is an important social aspect to students and can act as a form of class sorting. For many working class students at university this can be a point of conflict. Lisa remembers which school she came from as being very socially important:

> LISA: I remember that whole thing about what school you've come from being really important at university. The first year especially, what school did you go to was like [asking] what subjects are you doing...it was like the question you asked...like what sort of music are you into. That was something people always asked, what school had you gone to.

Being isolated from a family that lived at the other end of the country, Tracy found university hard to begin with. Even though she was living in a hall of residence with hundreds of other students in the same circumstances, Tracy was still socially isolated because of her social class background. In the following statement she recalls what it was like:

> TRACY: ...it was interesting when I came down here because a lot of people that went into the halls were Auckland people that came down. People used to come up to me and say 'you're from Auckland aren't you' and I would say 'yeah', and they'd say 'where from?', and I'd say 'oh, Glen Eden' and they'd just walk away...
> LYNN: Who were the people that said that?
> TRACY: they were people from places like Kings and Epsom Girls.

I would argue that social groups or classes do not generally mix with each other. One of the women I interviewed remembered the inability of her boyfriend's friends to mix socially with her friends from school:

> LYNN: Did you friends mix with his friends?
> LISA: Not really that much. There was sort of like another big social group which was kind of my school friends...and it was like another social group that I saw a lot of, but there was not much cross over really.

For the working class student entering the middle class university system this poses problems about fitting in. It also raises the issue of how willing the university is to embrace minority groups.

Getting comfortable within the social atmosphere of the university is important, but not an easy and straight forward process. Indeed, the costs of going down the 'university road' are often considered 'not worth the trouble' for many working class students. Therefore, it would seem that an important aspect of the reason why working class students do not go or complete a university education is because of the social isolation experienced within the informal social scene of the university system.

People confronted with such social conflicts can decide to either 'get on' and adapt to their new surrounds or they can leave the university. Eventually, however, it would seem that there can only be one choice; one must take priority over the other. My research indicates that the women who did 'succeed' within the university system and who obtained their qualifications had to 'get on' and learn to accept and deal with their differences in class background by developing middle class ways of 'knowing'. The women I interviewed coped in a number of ways. For example, Lisa would react according to how she felt at the time:

> TRACY: I think I really changed...kind of swung dramatically from going [saying] 'I went to Avonside', really proudly, to going 'Avonside' (quiet voice). Um yeah...I did, and it would just depend on how I felt that day, whether I was going to be proud of my working class background or not, and there were lots of times when I wasn't proud of it, but then I had days when I didn't...I had days when I wished I could of said I went to St Margarets...or you know, something socially acceptable, because there was this fear that someone would go 'oh'. You feel like you're being judged before anyone's got to know you, and you've got to be quite confident to cope with that.

Patricia found that apart from incidences of social conflict with family members, it was easier if she forgot about her working class school friends and tried to get on with university people:

> PATRICIA: I worked out very early on that I was different from many of the others at university because of my family background, so I generally kept to myself and socialised with the few good friends I already had.

Lisa also recalls an incident where a middle class male student a few years older than her started chatting her up, but when he discovered that she wasn't from the same social background as her he did not proceed. Thus for some, social class background seems to be an important factor in establishing both intimate relationships and friendships with other university students. The following conversation illustrates the social hierarchy between male and female students at the university:

> LISA: ...I remember Girls High girls really looking down on us in a big way.
> LYNN: who did, the girl?
> LISA: Yeah, the women did. The guys didn't care because basically if you looked good they didn't care where you came from. But the girls, yeah...I can remember girls from private schools, you know Girls High was kind of a step down, but Avonside, well now, 'so you're the only girl from your school that's at university are you'.

First impressions make a big impact on future perceptions. If our first impressions of university are not good then we may question our initial decision. One of the women in the study explains her first impressions of university:

> MAGGIE: And when I first walked into varsity...I mean I suppose we were all feeling our different emotions. But I thought fuck in' hell, this is serious, and I don't know if I can do it.

The same woman experienced mixed feelings about going to university when she actually walked on the campus for the first time. This upsetting incident occurred during a guided school tour of the university library:

> MAGGIE: I remember walking through the library and walking next to some guy from school, and this guy said to me 'why don't you hold hands dear'. This was in the library., and I remember being terrified...thinking is this the sort of place this is...scared the shit out of me at the time. I was really embarrassed...and I remember thinking gosh, I've bitten off more than I can chew this time, because I had this big thing about varsity.

Forming social contacts appears to be important at university. Patricia told me that she was always thankful that she had two good friends to start university with:

> PATRICIA: I don't know what would of happened if my two good friends didn't start varsity with me. I could see how clique everyone was, and there's nothing worse than feeling like you don't belong. I found it difficult to break into new friendship groups. I think it really helped already having my own.

Mary found life hard initially at university. It did not help that she started part way through the academic year:

> MARY: I didn't know anyone. And I didn't really get into my first year because I wasn't there. I was only there for a couple of hours, just going to my classes, then I'd go home or work.

Like Mary, some of the other women avoided the isolation they experienced at university by spending only as much time as was necessary. For one woman, social isolation would seem to have had a detrimental impact on her academic success that year:

> TRACY: I didn't go. I got into the university lift for the first time in the third term and couldn't work out how to get to the ground floor.

The existence of already formed friendship networks seems to be an important contributing factor to the way students cope at university. University has been shown to be a natural progression for middle class children, who have formed strong social ties with other middle class children through both the family structure and from within their middle class schools. This, I would argue, makes their transition from school to university a smoother one. Lisa had got to know her middle class boyfriend's set of friends quite well before starting university and recalls how large his social circle was when they first started university:

> LISA: It's like the friends I had at varsity, they were kind of like a self contained unit and they didn't really spread out that much. And it was quite a big group of people as well. So, I mean friends came along and did things, but they never...really...any friendships developed out of that. Not that they didn't like them, they just never became good mates.

The women participating in this study did not generally have close friendship groups to join upon their arrival at university, and so many experienced feelings of loneliness and subsequently a certain amount of dislike towards university:

> LYNN: How did you find your first year?
> MARY: Lonely. Partly because I didn't know anyone, and half because I didn't know what I was doing and I wouldn't ask questions, but otherwise O.K. I went back.

> LYNN: How did you find the other people at varsity?
> MARY: Oh, all right. I didn't get into the student scene, so I don't really know. Um...I found them all sort of clique, it was a clique...But it didn't bother me. I just did my work, had a few good friends and it was O.K.

In spite of the fact that one woman moved straight into a university hall of residence with many other students from out of town, she experienced social isolation because she was not part of any pre-formed social group:

> LYNN: Were you in the halls in your first year?
> TRACY: Yeah, but I didn't last long though. I stayed until the August of my first year and then I went flatting. I never really felt as if I belonged there. The people were really different, they were...I was the only person from my school who actually left town to go to university, there was no one from my part of town either.

Clearly, Tracy did not see herself as a part of any of the friendship groups in her halls of residence:

> TRACY: ...I was the only person from...I still wasn't one of those...I just didn't fit in, you know. I suppose...it's a lot to do with me too. I mean I just didn't like the environment and the sort of people.

Those women who felt socially isolated at university expressed a change in satisfaction with university when, in the ensuing years, they did strike up friendship groups. This factor would seem to verify the significance of individual social isolation as a contributing factor in the participation rates of certain social groups. Indeed this trend can again be seen in the case of one women who expressed the importance of her established social contact with others when she started at university:

> PATRICIA: I can remember thinking that I was different from a lot of the other people at university, you know in my lectures and stuff...and as I learned more and more about class issues...it became apparent to me that I was part of a minority at varsity. Actually I quite liked the sense of being that this knowledge gave me, and anyway I didn't feel isolated because I started university with my two best friends and we had an absolute ball.

One woman's first experiences of teachers college were not lonely because the college enacted a lengthy orientation period in which everyone went away on a camp in order to get to know one another. However, the same woman recalls feeling quite isolated at university:

> JANE: I just went over to enrol and that, and that's basically going over there, lining up by yourself, finding out which way to go by yourself, and where you go and get your photo taken and things like that. And that's all on your own.

This would suggest a need for universities to consider, very carefully, the implications of an unequally structured society on participation trends.

In this chapter I have sought to explain the significance of knowledge and how it is transmitted in schools. It has been explained that school knowledge is not neutral. Indeed, it is selected so as to reflect the values and experiences of the dominant group in society. This has the effect of promoting one set of interests over another. In general, working class kids do not see the relevance of academic knowledge for getting jobs, therefore they do not enter university after completing school. In addition, school knowledge is transmitted in schools according to the principles of the dominant group. This serves to reward those people who recognise these types of transmission, and confuses and disadvantages those who do not. Incorporated into attending university is a web of social relationships and events. I have argued that in some respects establishing oneself into the atmosphere of university life is not automatic for people who do not originate from

the dominant group, and can in fact spoil that person's chances of completing university.

CHAPTER 8
FINANCES

Finance is merely one of many important issues which must be addressed before deciding whether to go to university. Financing university study for three years must, for working class students, be considered alongside all other factors. These include: the fact that very few working class friends and peers go to university, the sometimes hostile and suspicious reactions from working class family members, a lack of confidence about their own academic ability, and finally, a typically vague understanding of the linkage between university and the professional and managerial career structure. As a result, working class students may decide that the reality of little financial support, for a minimum of three years, is enough reason not to go to university.

Funding of tertiary education in New Zealand is presently undergoing major changes, fuelling fierce debate, from both the left and right, about the role of the state and the nature of our education system. Essentially, since the fourth Labour Government, government policies have been monopolised by right wing economic theorists motivated by the accumulation of wealth through the capitalist process. It is my argument that right wing economic theories serve to decrease the opportunities of people from subordinate groups to participate, and therefore, benefit from a university (and, in fact, all post-secondary) education.

Recent policies related to funding of tertiary education have decreased the chances of working class participation in universities. In arguing for individual choice and a limited role for the state, New Right supporters depict the welfare state as a negative force which intrudes too much into people's lives;

> stifling initiative, inhibiting choice, and fostering drab uniformity (Middleton et al, 1990:ix).

New Right economic theories emphasise the competitive, acquisitive nature of individuals. Within this perspective, education is viewed primarily in economic terms: as a means of providing trained people to fulfil the requirements of the economy, and as a commodity to be chosen and consumed by individuals.

The influence of New Right economic policies on education in New Zealand has been profound (Boston, Haig, & Lauder, 1988). Underlying these initiatives are two fundamental principles: that education is a private good, and therefore should be paid for by the individual. This principle relies on human capital theory which maintains the notion that every individual wants to pursue a course that best maximises their wealth and status. Secondly, New Right theory suggests that an absence of competition leads to inefficiency within the education system, which results in a mismatching of the skills produced in schools and those required by the labour market. By introducing competition into the education system, these 'problems', therefore, rectify themselves.

As I have already stated, based on the philosophies of New Right theories, funding of tertiary education in New Zealand has undergone dramatic changes over the past few years. Basically, there has been a major shift towards user pays in education; the argument being, that because knowledge acquisition is regarded as a private good, the onus is on parents, and the individual concerned, to pay for post-secondary education. Applied in practice, user-pays has taken the form of a student loan scheme. Lauder (1990:20) comments on the consequences of user pays:

> The Student Allowance Scheme will not promote equality of opportunity, although equitable in the weak sense that government support is now given to all post-secondary students. This is because

> no extra incentive has been given to working-class, low income students to attend university, yet figures...clearly show that students from this background are massively un-represented at university.

He adds to this argument by reminding us that a university degree is a passport to professional and managerial occupations. He suggests that if the Labour government had been serious in its concern with equality of opportunity, it would have to provide a system of student support which was not neutral but that took affirmative steps to encourage low income, working class students to attend university.

Lauder (1990) points out the contradictions inherent in New Right thinking about education. He explains that it is far too simple to assume that income is the sole factor inhibiting working class people from attending university, and that once provided, income support will mean that many more people from low income families will be able to go to university. The contradiction lies in the fact that income is not the sole motivator. He writes:

> Unfortunately, the social world does not work in such as simple way. Research clearly shows that there are class cultural factors which inform the nature of educational decision-making in addition to income; it is highly unlikely therefore that working class students will take the risk of the burden of a loan, however low the repayment costs appear to be (Lauder, 1990:20).

In other words, students from low income families are less likely to go to university because their lack of financial and cultural capital makes them cautious. Also, working class students typically only have a vague understanding of the linkage between university and the professional and managerial career structure. Although the same may be true for their ruling-class counterparts, Lauder (1990:20-21) writes:

> the drive imparted to them by the acquisition of cultural capital means that they go to university without typically asking why they are going. Such a luxury is not afforded working class youth.

A further contradiction concerns the fact that by applying a loan scheme to polytechnics (traditionally noted as the domain of the working classes) as well as universities, polytechnics may become the domain of the middle classes. Finally, instead of creating more opportunities for people to participate and benefit from post-secondary education, government loan schemes will squelch the demand for post-secondary education, thereby reducing the amount of government money spent in the post-secondary sector: a major New Right goal.

From my interviews with the six working class women it could be seen that, although finances did not prevent these women from going to university, to a certain degree finances shaped their experience of university. Like many students, the working class women I interviewed had to work part-time whilst at university. One woman was prevented from becoming a full-time student in her first year at university because she had to work a forty hour week. The same woman was ineligible to receive government assistance in her final year because she got married. Clearly this type of policy disadvantages married people, who it is assumed want to be financially dependent upon their spouse.

Mary worked throughout her four years at university. She told me that in her first and second years she had two jobs. When I asked her how many hours she worked she told me:

> MARY: My first year would have been about thirty. My second year would have been about the same...oh, actually it dropped to about twenty. My third year, which was casual waitressing would have been about sixteen to about twenty-five hours. In my last year I did about twenty to thirty hours per week.

Mary also expressed the opinion that she might have achieved higher grades had she been able to spend more time on her studies. Unfortunately for Mary she did not have that luxury.

One woman had the added disadvantage of living at the other end of the country from her family and home. Thus she was unable to save money by living at home, and as a consequence incurred many financial problems whilst at university. Luckily this woman had a very sympathetic older brother who helped her, financially, on a number of occasions:

> TRACY: ...he's the one whenever I got stuck financially he'd just send me money out of the blue, 'cos he was starting to earn reasonable money by that time.

I would suggest that parents who do not see the point in a university education for their children are also far less likely to offer their support, whether that be financially or emotionally.

Jane recalls how the people she knew at university and teachers college always seemed to have enough money. She explains what it was like:

> JANE: You're aware of...of the money because you're...of course being a student, you didn't get much of it. So everything you do you have to account for and make sure you've got enough, you know...
> ...they had more money to spend than me...I think some of them, their parents paid for them, you know. And their grant money they would of had to spend. And I think they had things like, well I know my partner had a life insurance that Dad had been putting money into since he was a wee dot. And they had a car, that you know Mum and Dad had bought them a wee car that they all could share. And all I had was my bike.

Although the women I interviewed were not prevented from going to university because of financial reasons, funding their education was largely left up to them. In spite of most women being eligible for student financial assistance (this stopped for two of the women when they got married), all of the women had to participate in some sort of paid work. In general, the women's families were unable to offer much financial assistance. This was particularly chronic for one of the women, whose parents had been unemployed for a long time. For the women in this study, the cost of university was not a major factor in their decisions to attend university. However, the lack of financial support did affect their experiences as students, notably in that they did not have the secure financial basis of many middle class students. However, all these women graduated before the recent changes to student financial support.

The fact that the government has only just introduced user-pays and means testing into tertiary education means that it is too early to tell yet what effect this is going to have on student's participation at university, particularly on low income families. One of the women I interviewed indicated that her younger sister had put her plans to go to university aside in 1992 because she did not have the money. The effects of these changes to student support on the participation rates of working class students and those from cultural minority groups at university cannot be determined yet, and needs to be the subject of further research. However, in relation to the barriers already experienced by the women in this study it can be said that any further barriers can only reduce further the participation of this marginalised group.

CHAPTER 9
CONCLUSION

The fact that the six working class women I interviewed were able to use the education system to 'get ahead' does in no way suggest that this is common for working class people. On the contrary, traditionally most working class students only stay at secondary school long enough to get a basic education, going straight from school into jobs. In 1992, with record high (and increasing) unemployment levels, this pattern of working class students from school to jobs is not the case. Even when they do qualify to go to university, the great majority of working class students do not go.

This trend is important when we acknowledge that having a university qualification substantially increases a person's life chances. When Lauder (1988) compared the earnings of university educated versus non-university educated people in the labour market, he concluded that people with degrees are financially better off than those without. That is, although people with degrees may start later in the labour force than non-degreed people, thereby foregoing that many years salary, they quickly make up the difference and surpass (in terms of money) those without degrees. Whilst the earnings of people with university qualifications quickly surpasses others, their earnings also take longer to peak, signifying a greater earning potential. Furthermore, statistics show that people with post-secondary school qualifications are less likely to be unemployed, even though graduate unemployment is now at its highest levels ever (Vice-Chancellor's Committee, 1991). Therefore, two important factors contribute to a person's life chances through having a university qualification: that person is more likely to have a job (which is very significant with the current and future predicted numbers of

unemployed); and (in the long term) he/she will likely receive more money for their labour.

The current school/work relationship has been clouded further for working class students due to high unemployment levels in New Zealand. The current dislocation between schooling and the labour market has had important effects on the transition of working class students from school to the job market. On the one hand unemployment has resulted in schools' attracting students to stay longer in the school system, thereby improving their chances of obtaining entrance to university. On the other hand, there has been no affirmative action enacted by the government to attract working class students to go to university (this is also in spite of the fact that issues of class disparities have been highlighted over recent years). In fact, one could argue that recent user-pays policies in tertiary education are more likely to be seen by those working class students eligible to go to university as a further barrier to participation. Therefore, I would argue that the current dislocation between schooling and the labour market is not likely to provide the basis for more working class people to benefit from higher education.

In the course of this thesis I have attempted to explain how 'success' in the education system is not simply a matter of differences in scholastic ability. Rather, I have argued that factors such as class, gender and ethnicity are more important predictive characteristics for the likely 'success' of someone within the school system than that person's 'ability'. Therefore, it can be argued that education is not an equaliser but, as many radical theorists have argued, a mechanism for sorting and selecting people for their future roles in society.

Lauder et al (1984) demonstrate that at school, children from the upper class have over twice the advantage of the children from the working class, even when ability is accounted for. Furthermore, the nature of the school system has been shown to

severely disadvantage girls, irrespective of their class location, and to thoroughly undermine the potential of Maori and Pacific Island students. Clearly, therefore, our education system is operating in the interests of middle class Pakeha males.

Explaining why education is unequal necessitates a fuller understanding of the nature of society. Sociologists have long been examining inequality in society, taking different positions in answering this question, varying from those who have located inequality within the process of differentiation as societies have moved from simple to complex (Durkheim, 1960), to those who have seen inequality as the result of exploitation and domination of one group by another (Marx, 1979). Education has been established as one of the major sites whereby inequalities are generated and sustained.

Basically, it has been argued that education serves the needs of the dominant group in society. Rather than acting as a site where everyone has the same chance to succeed, sociologists of education generally agree that education promotes and helps sustain inequality. Once it was established that not everyone benefits from education equally, sociologists were left to argue about the exact nature of the inequality.

Theories about the role of education were first dominated by androcentric examinations which cited inequality as the sole result of an oppressive capitalist system. These theories were later criticised for the mechanistic way in which oppression was explained. Instead it was argued that, people are not merely passive pawns, rather, they actively negotiate their lives in the social structure. Feminist sociologists pointed out the inadequacies of these theories, highlighting their failure to account for the unique experiences of girls and women, and therefore their inability to pin-point the exact nature of inequality (including women's oppression). 'Mainstream' sociologists tended to ignore women because

they focused exclusively on the world of paid work and capitalism. Feminist sociologists argued that this was a one-sided view. In analysing the unique nature of women's lives, feminist sociologists pointed out that society is structured along capitalist and patriarchal lines. Therefore, any examination of such necessarily involves looking at the unpaid work of women in the private sphere of the home.

In analysing the type of society we are, it can be seen that these inequalities are inherently necessary. That is, without them our capitalist and patriarchal social structure would not exist. However, this system can only be sustained if we, as a society, legitimise its existence. That is, in order to sustain inequality we must all agree that a person's inability to take what is 'on offer' through the school system is a matter of personal failure or lack of talent.

My aims in conducting this study were to find out why the six working class women I interviewed went to university, when this was an uncommon thing for women (and men) of this class to do. In doing so I hoped to add to the sociological literature about the nature of educational decision making. In addition, by exploring the experiences of these women at university I was concerned with developing an analysis of the type of cultural capital which characteristics people at university, and how people at university from the subordinate groups in society cope with different class habitus. Finally, I was interested in theorising about the consequences of being an 'educated' working class woman.

The intersection of gender and class shaped these women's experiences of university in a number of significant ways. Firstly, their economic position meant that they had to work long hours whilst at university. Although this did not stop them from going to university, it was found to be a further barrier to the participation of marginalised groups.

Attending university caused conflict for all of the six women I interviewed. In their families, dissension resulted from conflicting stereotypes of femininity. That is, the working class women who wanted what education had to offer could not adopt traditional working class 'feminine' roles because they epitomise the kind of values that are inconsistent with higher education and a career. Because of this the women suffered a certain amount of class dislocation, often causing conflict. In another sense, the women I interviewed did follow 'feminine' roles because they took traditionally feminine subjects at university and followed 'feminine' careers. However this fact resulted in the women adopting largely middle class attitudes about femininity.

At university there was class conflict, mainly over the fact that the working class women did not (to begin with) possess the 'style' of the dominant group. This served to clearly distinguish this group from the dominant, who assumed the characteristics of the working class women were inferior.

One of the major themes arising from this research was the link between the family and school. Like Connell et al's (1982) research, in this study, the interaction between the family and school were found to structure the experiences of students within the school system. Thus, the women's experiences in school were structured according to the class and ethnic location of their families, and according to the class and gender (specific) characteristics of their families.

When we take into account the fact that the education system is structured according to the dominant habitus, therefore rewarding middle class students, it is easy to understand why the working class women in this study experienced conflict over their decision to go to university; primarily the womens' habitus did not reflect that embedded in the educational structure. One major conflict concerned

the difference in values held about education between parents and child. Parents also found it difficult to deal with changes in the traditional working class ideal of femininity. This suggests that it is not only schools that impose differential patterns of communication, but that students bring with them a range of cultural beliefs and values.

Defining 'success'?

The dictionary defines success as the favourable outcome of something attempted. However I would argue that success is a subjective category, the value of which depends upon who is in control of setting the criteria and evaluation. Throughout this thesis I have attempted to make the point that the nature of our education system does not reflect the values of all members of society and is therefore biased in favour of the dominant group. As such, success is evaluated in terms of the requirements of the dominant group and as a consequence may have little in common with the values of other groups in society. However, because the education system and its system of evaluation is essentially seen as equal, the fact that there are inequalities is ignored and we are led to believe that people generally get what they deserve. Moreover, those who 'succeed' do so because they have shown themselves to be the best. So when we say someone has succeeded in the education system what we are, in actual fact, saying is that some people have been more successful at internalising the values and beliefs of the dominant group in society. It is therefore hardly surprising that middle class people are more 'successful' in the education system, considering they are being taught in the type of 'language' which is most familiar, and when all they have to do is endorse their own unique cultural values.

In schools, subordinate cultures are undervalued and students either reject schooling or, as shown in this study, experience the conflict of adopting the dominant habitus within the education system, while trying to remain 'one of the family'. This conflict is perhaps most severe for people belonging to cultural minority groups, who are required to give up strongly held cultural beliefs in order to succeed in the Pakeha schooling system.

Why did they 'succeed'?

Understood in sociological terms, the working class women in this study 'succeeded' by internalising major parts of the dominant ideology. They took on, what Bourdieu referred to as the habitus of the dominant group. That is, the body of knowledge, the tacit understandings, the class specific set of values, tastes, norms, styles of presentation, language etc., common to the middle classes and which reflect the type of ideology endorsed and reflected in the education system. Indeed, without a middle class habitus the women would have been unlikely to have seen the relevance of higher education.

Essentially, obtaining their degrees and getting started on their careers signified a dramatic departure from their working class roots, and a more dramatic move into the ranks of the middle class. Therefore, by the time they had finished university the working class women tended to identify more with the dominant ideology of the middle class than their working class one.

In adopting a habitus different to the one of their basic socialisation, the working class women suffered a certain amount of class dislocation. In many distinctive

ways the women developed important differences to their working class families and peers.

Their situation as working class women at university meant living in a kind of class limbo; having to be able to adapt to both class situations. I suppose as individuals the women could have chosen to live by middle class standards, however this was not really possible because it ran the risk of being cut off from their families. In addition, the women were neither wholly accepted by the general populous of the middle class university as, whilst they had internalised the knowledge of the dominant group, they were only learning to adopt the dominant 'style', in their clothes, attitudes and values. Therefore, it was generally a no win situation. In order to 'succeed' at university they had to abide by middle class rules, and in order to be accepted into their working class families they had to either mask their associated habitus or risk not obtaining what they wanted.

Aspects of the university's value system were inconsistent and often contradictory to the working class women's lives. For example, due to their material existence the women found it necessary to work part-time whilst at university; sometimes doing nearly a full week's work. One woman could not go full time at university in her first year because she did not have enough money. Generally, work (other than study) was inconsistent with the requirements of university, and as such the women's paid work conflicted with their studies.

Alton Lee et al (1990) make the comment that the more successful a person is, the more they are going to identify with the dominant ideology. This is true of the working class women I spoke to, however this was also offset by the conflict they experienced. In order to cope the working class women developed a mixture of the two, often opposing, class habitus, which generated conflict with both their working class families and middle class university counterparts.

Conflict in class relationships was created because of contradictions associated with being a working class woman at university. Research indicates that different class groups attach different values to, and have different expectations about, education Hughes and Lauder, 1988; Lauder et al, 1992). The associated habitus also reflect gender specific characteristics. A clear example of this was highlighted when Maggie explained how her mother did not want her to go to university. Because Maggie's mother endorsed 'traditional' working class ideals about femininity, (which did not include the pursuit of academic scholarship) she found it difficult to see the worth of academic study in her daughter's life.

The Pacific Island woman that I interviewed was also disadvantaged at university because of the contradictory nature of her 'socialisation' as a woman from an ethnic minority culture. Although Mary did not experience conflict with her family over her decision to go to university, in some ways she found that her cultural capital was inconsistent with that recognised by the university. Just as Jones (1988) noted that Pacific Island girls lack the appropriate cultural capital recognised by the educational structure, Mary lacked some of the appropriate cultural capital recognised by the university. Therefore, she was inhibited at times from effective learning because, for example, she had not learned to ask questions and speak up in class discussions (which are important traits required in order to 'succeed' within the university system). Luckily, for Mary, she had enough 'knowledge' to make up for what she did not recognise, whilst she learned to internalise many of the 'rules' as she progressed through her university degree. As a consequence, in many respects, by the time she completed university, Mary's habitus was fairly consistent with that of the dominant middle class.

Although one of the women's decisions mirrored more that of middle class attitudes towards university (she did not question going to university, stating that it

was a natural progression according to the collective wisdom of her peer group), once at university she experienced class conflict. This conflict was primarily due to differences in class background; for example, the fact that she had not gone to what was considered (by the dominant group) a 'good' school. Tracy was not the only one to experience class conflict. Maggie found that middle class students spoke differently and had different material existences.

The notion of knowledge was very central to the working class women's experiences at university. Essentially, the knowledge they entered university with was not the same kind that they left with. Keeping in mind the fact that they would have had to have possessed a certain amount of middle class habitus to enable them to be at university, their knowledge differed in many respects from that held by the people from middle class backgrounds. It became apparent that the most respected and valued knowledge (held by the dominant group) was not freely available to all school students. Instead it incorporated certain qualities not taught in the official school curriculum. This included information taught in middle class families which was clearly recognised by schools. For example, staying up until the small hours of the morning reading poets, philosophers and the like. It also involved high levels of articulation, general knowledge and knowledge of world events. Some of the most valued knowledge included the kind gained from extensive travel and experiencing different cultures. Clearly this knowledge is additional to that taught by the school, and can only be acquired through particular kinds of 'lifestyle'; those of the wealthy middle class. As such, it is simply out of the realm of the day to day experiences of most working class kids. Because this type of knowledge is not available to everyone, those people whose lifestyle it reflects have a significant advantage over those who do not.

The working class women had their knowledge questioned when they first entered university, signifying the existence of a hierarchy of different types of knowledge.

Because they were members of a subordinate group at university, much of their knowledge was inconsistent with the type recognised by the university, and seen as inferior. Therefore, in order to succeed the working class women had to adapt their knowledge to that of the dominant group; thereby, in many instances, incorporating opposing types of habitus to their working class families. Quite simply, the university only endorses one 'way of knowing', and people from subordinate groups have no choice but to assimilate themselves to the dominant code, if they want what the university is offering.

School pupils make sense of 'being a student' in many ways. In the past ethnographies into the lives of boys (Willis, 1977) and girls (McRobbie, 1978) have tended to concentrate on a narrow range of kids who are anti-school. This has had the effect of implying that working class children are, in general, anti-school. Although these studies have delivered valuable insights into the school experiences of working class children, they have done little to explain the experiences of the vast majority of kids, who neither reject or totally embrace schooling (Brown, 1987). Other studies, notably that of Jones (1986) in New Zealand, have demonstrated how even when working class children accept what the school has to offer, they do not necessarily have the type of cultural capital needed to achieve this.

My study was similar to Jones's (1986) in that the participants took what the school had to offer, but differed in the fact that they managed to acquire enough cultural capital to get them what they wanted from the school and university systems. Therefore, the women involved in this study are among the 'comparatively rare' few working class people, who according to Hughes and Lauder (1991:9):

> make a conscious decision to reject the collective wisdom of their class.

For the working class women involved in this study achieving 'success' definitely meant paying a price.

APPENDIX ONE

To protect anonymity, each of the participants was given a pseudonym.

Family Background

Maggie:

Although Maggie's father had been made redundant on a number of occasions, both her parents worked, and had done always. Maggie's father left school at fifteen without formal qualifications and became a qualified carpenter. Maggie's mother had always wanted to be a nurse but was prevented from doing so by her mother. Instead she left school at fifteen, narrowly failing School Certificate, to undertake clerical duties. Upon marriage and with two children Maggie's mother continued to work full-time in the fish trade (mostly retail and kitchen duties). Maggie's older brother, by two years, achieved good passes in all of his School Certificate subjects and left school to take up an apprenticeship as a motor reconditioner. Maggie's parents were first generation New Zealanders of British ancestry.

Maggie's first three years were spent at a single-sex high school whereupon she transferred to a co-ed for her remaining two years. She went straight from the seventh form to university, and was enrolled to do a Bachelor of Science. Maggie transferred to Massey University in the North Island in her second year to take up a professional degree in Regional Planning, but transferred back to Canterbury University in the following year to resume her science degree. After four years she graduated with a Bachelor of Science in geography. Maggie has been working as a sales representative since completing university.

Tracy:

Like the other members of her family, Tracy was born in Britain. Her family emigrated to New Zealand in the early 1970's along with some of her other relatives. Tracy told me that her mother was from a poor family of fourteen children. Like everyone else in her area, Tracy's mother left school at fifteen and went to work in a pharmacy until she got married. Tracy's mother had eleven brothers who all worked in the mines. Tracy's grandfather (on her father's side) was a school caretaker, and her grandmother a housekeeper. Her father only had one sibling. At seventeen, Tracy's father left tech where he was doing a certificate in science, to get married to her mother. Tracy was the second youngest of four children. She told me that her family came to New Zealand because they were tired of the racism and class structure in Great Britain. When her family arrived in New Zealand her father had a transfer with his company, working as a laboratory assistant. In the evenings he worked a milk run. After a succession of similar jobs, Tracy's father got a job as a technical liaison officer for the New Zealand Fire Service, where he remains working today. Tracy's mother was the primary caregiver while the children were young and worked in the evenings (while the father was not working) at a factory making paper cups. She also had a job as a clothing machinist making men's shirts, she worked in supermarkets and then began making place mats in a factory. Since starting at the place mat factory, fifteen years ago, Tracy's mother has moved up to become factory floor manager and has completed a series of management papers at her local polytech. Tracy's older brother started university after completing a seventh form year, but did not finish his first year at university. He then did well enough on an IQ test to get a cadet-ship with the company IBM, where he has forged a very successful career. Tracy's older sister was working as a technician and her younger sister was just finishing school at the time of the interview. She was contemplating going to university but has decided against that because she cannot afford it.

Tracy spent a total of four years at Canterbury University. Initially she was enrolled to do a Bachelor of Commerce in accountancy but decided this was not suitable. Instead, the following year she began a Bachelor of Arts and graduated three years later, majoring in geography. In her third year Tracy got married. She is presently working within the health profession as a hospital administrator and has just undertaken study for a Master of Business Studies at the University of Canterbury.

Lisa:

Lisa is the youngest of three girls in her family. Her father was born on the Chatham Islands and came to New Zealand to go to school. She told me that her father had not liked school, finding the transition from his home to school very difficult. As a consequence he left school as soon as he could. Lisa's father was working as a freezing worker at the time I interviewed her, and had done so for quite some time. Lisa's mother would have liked to stay at school but was forced to leave by her father on her fifteenth birthday, in order to earn money for the family. Whilst being the primary caregiver, Lisa's mother had undertaken a number of jobs over the years. Lisa's oldest sister completed a couple of years at university upon leaving high school. Lisa's other sister finished the seventh form, went to work for a year or so, then went to university where she did a degree in computer science. She now works in the computer industry as a computer programmer.

Lisa went to a single-sex high school, where she completed a seventh form year. She told me that she was the only girl in her seventh form year to attempt university scholarship examinations. At university Lisa enrolled in a Bachelor of Arts degree. It took her three years to complete this, majoring in education. The following year she completed an honours course. After that she began her Master

of Arts thesis which she did part time, graduating in 1991. Whilst researching her thesis, Lisa worked as a sales representative, where she remains now.

Jane:

Jane was primarily reared by her mother as her parents separated when she was young. Her father was working for a rubber factory and had done so for quite some time. Her grandfather (on her father's side) had been a freezing worker and her grandmother was chiefly responsible for rearing their children. Jane's mother left school to become a secretary. She then worked part-time at the polytech as a tutor. Her mother's father worked at the council. Jane's grandmother (on her mother's side) was responsible for raising six children. Presently, Jane's mother works as a full-time tutor at the ploytech. Jane has one other sister and two brothers. Her sister is a nurse, her brother is a secondary school teacher and her younger brother is presently at university.

Jane went to a single-sex school. She passed three subjects in her School Certificate examinations. Although failing to obtain a UE qualification in the following year, Jane went straight into the seventh form where she passed. This enabled her to go to university and teachers college. At teachers college, Jane trained to be a primary school teacher and also did a Bachelor of Arts at the same time. The following year she enrolled in a Masters of Education. Presently Jane is in her third and final year of part-time post-graduate study. She also works full-time as a primary school teacher.

Mary:

Mary's parents' marriage ended when she was very young. Since then she has been brought up by her mother and step father. Mary was born in Australia and her mother is from Western Samoa. This makes her part Australian and part Samoan. Her step father is also Samoan. She has spent the majority of her life in

New Zealand. Presently, both of Mary's parents are unemployed and have been so for some time. She has two sisters, both younger. The youngest lives and works in Wellington doing clerical work in a government department. The other sister lives and works in Christchurch.

Mary did not have an easy time at school. At first she went to a single-sex Catholic girls school but was asked to leave. She then went to a co-ed school which she said she liked a lot more. Mary passed all major school examinations and in her seventh form year took up a AFS scholarship to the United States. After she got back from overseas she enrolled for a Bachelor of Arts degree at Canterbury University, part way through the year. Majoring in political science in her first year, sociology in her second and geography in her third year Mary graduated one year later with a BA in geography. During her third year at university Mary got married. Her first job upon leaving university was with the Housing Corporation, however she quickly took another offered in IWI Transition (a government department dealing with the 'transition' of Pacific Island people into New Zealand society). After two years in this position Mary left paid work to have her baby. She now has a one month old infant son.

Patricia:

Patricia is the third of four children to her British immigrant parents. Her father left school when he was fourteen and worked in a succession of jobs. Although never gaining any formal trade qualifications, Patricia's father has mainly worked as a tradesman. He is currently working as a builder. Patricia's father was raised by his mother in his younger years because his father was killed in the Second World War. Patricia's mother left school at fifteen despite being academic. She went to work in a number of factory jobs before she was married. Upon marriage, although she did not have the time to work full-time in the paid labour market because she was rearing four children, Patricia's mother took a succession of part-

time jobs. Thus for most of her adult life she has been involved in paid worked. Patricia's older brother has a university degree and works in a government department. Her sister left school at fifteen to get a job as a gardener. Her younger brother completed a sixth form year and left school to become an apprentice painter.

Patricia went to a single sex high school where she stayed for five years, repeating one year. Upon leaving school she enrolled at Canterbury University in a Bachelor of Arts degree. After four years she graduated and now has a job working in a government department.

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